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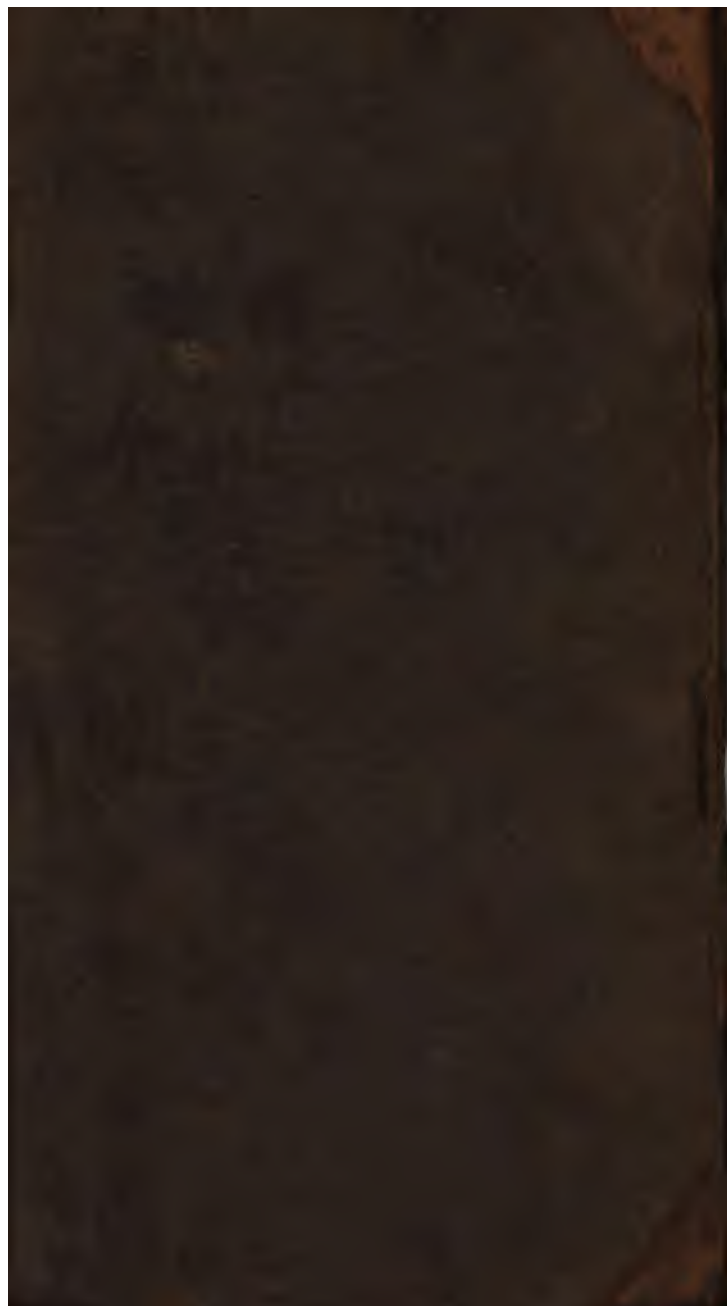
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THE
NUN OF MISERECORDIA;

OR,

THE EVE OF ALL SAINTS.

A Romance.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY SOPHIA FRANCES,
AUTHOR OF VIVONIO, CONSTANCE DE LINDENS DORE, &c.

Not sleep, nor sanctuary,
* * * * *
The prayers of priests, nor times of sacrifice,
—shall lift up
Their privilege and custom 'gainst my hate.
SHAKESPEARE.

VOL. II.

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THE
NUN OF MISERECORDIA.

CHAP. I.

UNCONSCIOUS that she was followed by the dog, whom, in her agitation and anxiety of mind, she had forgotten, Adelaide entered the saloon, where her aunt usually sat. The Marchioness was absent, but the Marquis was seated at a table, earnestly engaged in perusing some letters. Adelaide, whose emotion was infinitely increased on perceiving him, silently retreated, and would have withdrawn, but the Marquis suddenly raising his eyes, caught

VOL. II. B a glance

a glance of her robe, as she was leaving the room, and instantly rising, followed, and was on the point of leading her back, when he beheld the dog.—Starting back, he exclaimed, in a tone which indicated surprise, anger, and embarrassment—

“ How has this hideous animal found his way hither? He cannot surely have followed you, Mademoiselle ?”

Adelaide, in reply, said, that she believed the dog had really followed her, as he had attached himself to her, and could not be induced to leave her since the preceding night.

The Marquis now made an attempt to drive the dog from the room, but was soon compelled to desist, as the fierce growl and fiery eye of the animal gave evident indication that he would not leave the side of Adelaide.

“ This is most extraordinary !” said the Marquis:—“ You must have frequently seen this dog, Mademoiselle ; nothing but the most blameable encouragement could
have

have rendered the animal so very untractable."

He then hastily rung the bell, and a servant immediately appearing, the Marquis directed the man to take the dog away; but the poor fellow had like to have paid most dearly for his temerity, in endeavouring to obey his Lord's commands, the obstinate Cæsar instantly springing at his throat; and had not the terrified Adelaide exerted both her voice and her hands in his behalf, the servant would have been dangerously hurt.

The Marquis now, for the first time in the presence of his niece, uttered several frightful execrations on the dog; and commanding Jaques, the porter, to be sent to him, he dismissed the servant.

Adelaide evidently perceiving how singularly disagreeable to the Marquis was the presence of her four-footed guard, again expressed a wish of withdrawing; but her uncle, in an agitated and peremptory manner, insisted on her remaining where

she was, adding, that he desired to speak to her on a very important subject.

She again sat down, and Cæsar took his place at her feet, while the Marquis, eyeing this action of the dog with evidently increasing surprise and chagrin, paced the room, for near ten minutes, in gloomy silence.

The opening of the folding doors at length drew the attention of both himself and Adelaide, who, on looking towards them, beheld an aged man, whose silver locks and venerable countenance rendered him a most interesting figure, enter the room.—Lowly bowing, he requested to know the Marquis's commands.

“I sent for you, Jaques,” replied his Lord, in a tone of affability, “to take hence that animal, which has unaccountably attached himself to my niece, to whom he is extremely troublesome. When I gave you permission to retain him, recollect, it was on condition that he should not be suffered to run about the castle; call
him

him away, and confine him closely for the future.”

“The Count Louis loved him extremely, my Lord,” said the old man, who, while the Marquis was speaking, had kept his dim, but expressive eyes, intently fixed on Adelaide, who, while a tear fell from her downcast eyes, involuntarily patted the head of Cæsar.—“The Count Louis loved him extremely, my Lord,” repeated Jaques, “and it is but natural that the poor old dog should fawn on his master’s only child.”

“Are you mad, Jaques?” cried the astonished Marquis. “Can the animal possess instinct to ascertain, in a being he has but lately seen, the daughter of a master whom he lost ere a year old?”

“Stranger things than that have happened before now, my Lord,” meekly replied Jaques; “there are many instances of animals of this kind having discovered terrible murders, and——.”

“Peace, I command thee, dotard!”

angrily cried the Marquis; "call the dog away, and begone."

Jaques, looking most wistfully at Adelaide, obeyed; and now Cæsar sprung up and ran to his old master, who was slowly retreating with him from the room, when the dog flew back; nor could any further effort succeed in separating him from his new mistress. In vain did the Marquis rage, and Jaques vow and threaten—Cæsar could not be removed; and at length the old man was dismissed, inwardly rejoicing that his lovely young lady had found so faithful a protector as poor Cæsar.

Some time elapsed ere the Marquis was sufficiently composed to be able to address his niece on the subject on which he intended to speak. Perceiving his emotion and perplexity, she begged him to defer, to some future period, whatever he might have to say.

"No," said the Marquis, in reply, "I cannot delay the concern which engages my
my

my attention—I have just received letters from Lisbon.”

Adelaide was now all attention.

“ And I find that some of my brother's effects, which were in the hands of the French Envoy, have been saved. Several caskets of rich jewels, and many papers of importance, have been forwarded to me, and I expect they will arrive in the course of a few days. As to Don Alvarez de Suza, I cannot obtain any decisive information respecting him; but there is a report prevalent in Lisbon, that the vessel in which he sailed from Brazil is lost, and that every person on board perished. But as there is no possibility of saying how far this report may be depended upon, we will wave this subject. The death of your father—pardon, my dear niece, the necessity I am under of speaking on this point, but—nay, tears, Adelaide! I can allow for this tenderness; but do you conceive that there are no hearts ready to sympathise in your amiable sorrow? Oh, no! Adelaide can-

not be so unjust. Believe me, dearest, loveliest girl, you cannot feel a pang which I do not share. Oh, Adelaide! let not baleful suspicion warp the artless emotions of your pure mind, and teach you to condemn, on appearances only, those who would hazard fame and life to ensure your felicity."

Here the Marquis, who, with looks of tenderness and admiration, was bending over the couch on which Adelaide sat, attempted to take her hand, which, with a sickly sensation of involuntary horror, she hastily withdrew, and rising, requested permission to retire.

"I perceive," said the Marquis, gently detaining her, "I perceive, Adelaide, that I have no hope of obtaining your confidence or affection, and yet I would die to possess either. Ah! do not turn away thus. If you could read my soul, and behold the gnawing afflictions which prey upon my life, I should excite in your gentle bosom the deepest sense of pity. Adelaide,

laide, (he continued, wildly seizing her hand, and gazing on her with glances expressive of the keenest emotion) I am not what I seem—a strange and dreadful fate has involved my life—but oh! surely my misery, my despair, are punishments sufficient for the worst of crimes—but now my torments are increased. I see you, whose beaming eyes send forth the rays of an angelic soul, and I feel plunged into an abyss dark and fathomless. I cannot recover from this state—my soul looks with horror at what I might have been, and I feel impelled to quit an existence now leathsome and hateful beyond description. But ere the night of ruin closes on my soul, learn this—to you, innocent and lovely angel, I proclaim that I am not—”

The entrance of the Marchioness, supported by one of her women and Henrietta, followed by the Chevalier Bionville and De Valmont, interrupted the wild incoherent raving of the Marquis, who hastily walked to one of the windows, to conceal,

in some degree, his agitation, while Adelaide, still overwhelmed with astonishment and terror, had scarcely power to reply to the Marchioness and the gentlemen, while Henrietta, alarmed by the agitated countenance of her friend, gazed on her in fear and wonder.

When the first compliments had passed, the Marquis joined the groupe. His features had already regained something of their usual serious calmness, but he was so pale and abstracted, that Adelaide, although now convinced that he had been criminal in some dark deed, yet imagining that his guilt was rather the effect of some fatal error, than the result of premeditation, felt inclined to pity his sad state. Her compassionate and timid glance was not unobserved by the Marquis, who soon appeared to be again much agitated, and paid her a thousand little attentions, which the lovely girl received with less coldness and reserve, as she now reflected, that whatever might have been the crimes of her uncle, she

she had no right to arraign the conduct of the brother of her dear lamented father.

Soon after dinner, the Marquis and De Valmont withdrew. Bionville now ceased his persecution of Henrietta, and would have attached himself to the side of Adelaide, had not Cæsar, by unceasing growls, whenever the Chevalier approached her, prevented his fulfilling his intention. The appearance of the large dog, had excited the notice of the Marchioness and her company, on their first entrance, but on learning the result of every effort that had been made to tear him from his young mistress, the Marchioness highly applauded the sagacity and extraordinary instinct of the dog, and with all the air of good-natured pleasantry, which so well became her years, advised her niece by no means to repulse her new protector, who, she said, might, on some emergency, prove himself a powerful friend.

Adelaide was pleased with this permission, and testified her satisfaction so warmly,

ly, as to excite the raillery of Bionville, who assured her, that were she inclined to turn wandering damsel, she would at least have a faithful knight-errant to bear her company. There was, however, so much ill-disguised sneering irony in the Chevalier's manner of speaking, that both Adelaide and Henrietta felt confused and alarmed, as his words seemed obliquely to hint at a knowledge or suspicion of their intentions of leaving the castle. This apprehension prevented the young friends from daring to seek any opportunity of breathing a whisper to each other that evening; and Adelaide was compelled to retire to her apartment, without having been able to slip the little billet she had written previous to her quitting her room, into the hands of Henrietta.

CHAP. II.

IN crossing the great hall, Adelaide perceived Jaques apparently in waiting. The old man, on beholding her, respectfully approached, and asked permission to again attempt withdrawing Cæsar from her for a time. This request was immediately granted; and having slipped a collar and cord round the neck of the animal, he succeeded in detaining him, while Adelaide hastened up the grand staircase. At the entrance of a gallery, that communicated with the corridor on which her apartments opened, she was overtaken by Marcella.

“So, Mademoiselle,” said the old woman,

man, in a tone of high glee, "we shall have rare doings soon. There are the artists and workmen, who were sent for from Paris, all arrived; and my Lord has given orders that all the fine painting and gilding shall be set about immediately, as he don't intend any longer to live such a mewed up life when he is here, but will have company and feasting in the castle all the year round."

The astonishment of Adelaide, on receiving this singular and unexpected information, was excessive; and when they had entered her apartment, she made Marcella repeat this intelligence, which appeared so far beyond credibility. She could not, however, long doubt the truth of Marcella's assertions, and soon began to hope that the bustle and confusion which so many workmen might occasion in the castle, might be favourable to her escape.

It was nearly dark when she had reached her chamber; lights were immediately brought in by another attendant; and as
there

there was a long interval to wait till her usual hour of supping and retiring to repose, she wished to employ the tedious hours in reflecting on the means of acquainting De Valmont with her resolve of speedily departing from the castle, and also on the most likely method of again seeing Henrietta, whom she would have again ventured to meet in the deserted chambers that night, had she not been unhappily disappointed in finding an opportunity of fixing an hour for their meeting. She now regretted having permitted Jaques to take the faithful Cæsar from her, as she imagined, that with the dog by her side, she could even have attained courage to visit the rooms, and endeavour to call Henrietta, by rapping against the sliding-board, which was concealed in the book-case.

The regrets of Adelaide respecting Cæsar were soon ended, by the sudden appearance of the animal, who, having broke loose, came bounding into the apartment ; but on reflection, the fear of not succeeding

ing in making Henrietta hear her, and the hope she indulged of being able to communicate her wishes to her friend on the day following, determined her not to hazard encountering unnecessary alarms.

Marcella, who had impatiently watched till the silent cogitations of Adelaide appeared to have ended, now, on perceiving her rise, and speak to Cæsar, proposed, as the evening was so long, that her young lady would have the goodness to read the surprising history of the Sister of Mercy.

This was a painful task, which Adelaide earnestly desired, but feared to attempt; yet, as she felt deeply interested in the subject, she endeavoured to check the violent emotions which the idea of the Nun of Miserecordia ever excited in her mind, and assented to the request of Marcella.— But on looking for the manuscript on the table in the anti-chamber, where the ancient attendant positively declared she had thrown it, the book was not to be found, and all further search after it proved ineffectual.

fectual. Notwithstanding the repeated assurances that Marcella gave of being certain that she had laid it on the table, Adelaide could not avoid being of opinion, that the old woman, in her hurry and af-fright, in flying from the deserted rooms, had either left it in the apartments, or dropped it as she hastened away in her alarm, on seeing the head of Henrietta in the book-case.

This circumstance furnished Adelaide with an excuse for visiting the gloomy suite on the morrow; and Marcella having declared that all the riches of the world could not bribe her to go there, after what she had seen, Mademoiselle St. Viviers said she herself would venture, with only Cæsar for her guard.

The ancient female servant, who brought in the slight supper, confirmed Marcella's account of the preparations for the entertainment of company, which were to commence on the morrow; and added, that she had heard from one of the Marchioness's
own

Own women, that these proceedings did not entirely meet with the approbation of her lady, who, however, assumed an appearance of satisfaction which she did not feel, lest she might wound the feelings of the Marquis, whose strange whim, though she did not approve, she was unwilling openly to condemn.

This singular and unaccountable alteration in his customary habits of living in the castle, struck the mind of Adelaide with increasing astonishment; and when she mentally compared the distraction and despair which had marked his conduct and language to her in the morning, she could not reconcile, with a display of so much misery, the apparent ardour for introducing a life of gaiety and dissipation—a life, in fact, so ill suited to the whole of his domestic establishment, and the manners and inclinations of his lady. The more she reflected, however, the more she became perplexed, terrified, and enraged; and could only conclude, that as there was not any probability

probability of developing so many frightful and singular mysteries, the only safe and proper step she could pursue was to fly from the scene of her troubles with all possible speed. Thus, in painful and distressing reflections, and disturbed slumbers, she passed the night; and in the morning received a billet from the Marchioness, requesting that she would confine herself to her apartments, till the castle was free from the strangers and workmen, who were then employed in it.

Adelaide now, having no prospect of seeing Henrietta, unless she had courage to venture into the deserted rooms, was compelled to resolve on so doing; and soon after breakfast, she, under pretence of going thither to find the manuscript, which the terrified Marcella had forgotten, quitted her own apartment, accompanied by her faithful Cæsar.

The day was clear and frosty, and the brilliant sunbeams, which illumined the snow-covered mountains, served to disperse,

perse, in some degree, the gloom of the desolate suite of rooms. She passed through them without experiencing much agitation; and after listening at the book-case, and fancying that she heard Henrietta moving in her own room, tapped gently against the sliding-board, which was immediately drawn back by her friend, who, laying her finger on her lip, in token of silence, softly whispered, that in a few minutes she would lock the door of her room, under pretence of passing an hour in reading a devotional book, given her by the Marchioness, and then join her. Adelaide waited patiently, while Henrietta put her little artifice into execution, and employed herself in looking for the manuscript, which she soon found lying near the foot of the book-case.

In a few minutes after, Henrietta entered through the sliding-board. Adelaide lost not an instant ere she informed her friend of her resolution to leave her uncle, the moment De Valmont could effect their escape;

escape; and having mentioned his proposal of placing them under the protection of his friends in Holland, they determined to proceed thither, in preference to then going to England, where Henrietta had no female relative to receive them. Adelaide, then reverted to the uneasiness she began to feel, at not having again heard from the Count St. Croix; and Henrietta informed her that De Valmont was in daily expectation of hearing from his friend, and imagined that he should soon have a packet for her.

The subject of the Marquis's new arrangements, and the chagrin of his lady, next engaged the attention of the lovely friends; but Henrietta, like Adelaide, was equally at a loss to account for this sudden and astonishing change. The necessity of exploring the passage which the dog had discovered to them, soon, however, formed the most important subject of their conversation; but this they dared not, fearful of discovery, attempt in the day-time; and
neither

neither seemed to possess the requisite courage for making such an effort, when the sombre gloom of night added new terrors to every object around. Embarrassed and irresolute, they had paused to reflect on this perplexing point, when the sound of a footstep near them caught the attention of Adelaide, who, on turning suddenly, beheld old Jaques entering the room through the sliding pannel, which opened into the passage they so anxiously wished to, but dared not, explore. Henrietta, starting up, would have run to secrete herself, when Adelaide, hastily taking her hand, advanced towards the old man, who had stood motionless, on perceiving them in the apartment.

“Jaques,” said the lovely girl, addressing the old man with all that native sweetness and elegant simplicity of manner, which in her was so inexpressibly charming, “you loved my dear lamented father; your faithful attachment to him is well evinced, by
your

your care and affection for this poor animal."

Jaques wiped a tear from his eye, patted the head of the dog, and bowed to Adelaide with an air of unfeigned and humble gratitude, while she continued—"By the love and respect you bore your late Lord, I entreat that you will not betray my being here to any person whatever: the young lady whom you behold with me is my friend; we are painfully situated, and —."

"And you wish to leave this painful situation, Mademoiselle," said the old man, his honest zeal causing him to interrupt Adelaide: "Ah! young lady, you cannot go too soon; this is what I told the young Count St. Croix. Mademoiselle, said I, cannot leave this place too soon."

"You, Jaques! and do I find in you that concealed friend, who has so awfully warned the Count of my impending fate in this horrible abode?"

Jaques now hesitated, and looked rather confused; yet he said, "In whatever I have
done,

done, I did but my duty to your noble father, Mademoiselle ; and could I once see you in safety, I think I could die in peace ; for this sad world has no charms for me."

"Then you will aid my flight, Jaques?"

"Undoubtedly, Mademoiselle ; and I'm sure 'tis Providence directed your steps to these rooms ; for I have been watching an opportunity of telling you to come here ever since the Count was forced to go away, and I never could find one either to speak or write to you, or to that young lady. Do you know, Mademoiselle, that the passages by which I came here lead down under the vaults to my lodge, and that, if you had but courage to venture through such dismal places, you might be at liberty in a few hours at any time."

It may easily be conceived what joy this information afforded both Henrietta and Adelaide, neither of whom hesitated to assure Jaques that they had courage to encounter any difficulties to get away from the castle.

Jaques

Jaques testified much satisfaction on receiving such assurances, and then asked Adelaide whether she had not first met Cæsar in those rooms ?

“ I often come here for some old legend, to help me to pass away the long winter nights, young ladies,” added Jaques ; “ and poor Cæsar always bears me company in my visits to this place, and I missed him in my last ramble hither.”

The old man now asked several other questions relative to the projected flight of Adelaide and her friend, and was informed that they depended on the Chevalier de Valmont for arranging their mode of disguise and travelling. Jaques was much pleased with this communication, and spoke in very high terms of De Valmont, whom he represented as a very excellent young man ; while of the Chevalier Bionville he said,—“ France has not his equal for vice and cruelty : he has been the utter ruin of this family. But I have not time, young ladies, to tell you a mil-

lionth part of what crimes the Chevalier has committed, and yet he goes unpunished ; well, there is a world which he dreams not of, and there vice and virtue never fail of meeting their rewards. If it was not so, Mademoiselle, how could we account for the innocent suffering so many troubles in this life, and the guilty possessing so many pleasures?"

" This is true, Jaques," replied Adèlaide, charmed with the intelligence and simplicity of the good old man. " But recollect that the innocent have even in this life the possession of a treasure which exceeds the wealth of Princes. Though oppressed, calumniated, and afflicted, they carry in their breasts the sweet balm of virtue, and the consoling consciousness that the bitterness of their lot in this life will yet be exchanged for the bright and eternal reward to which their religion points ; while the guilty, harrassed and tormented by the dreadful conviction of their own crimes, a conviction which intrudes amid all the glare

glare of wealth and dissipation, oftentimes turn with a sickly but transient disgust from the pleasures for which they have bartered their peace here, and happiness hereafter; or wildly hoping to lose the stinging sense of their guilt in riot and sensuality, plunge deeper into the abyss, and are lost for ever !”

“ Very true, very true, my dear young lady,” sighed the old man, shaking his hoary head ; “ but it is a shocking thing to think that people never once consider, while they are oppressing and imposing upon all who put any trust in them, what may afterwards happen to themselves. Ah ! it is a sad thing that they never once think that they must die—and then—But alas !”

At this moment Henrietta, imagining that she heard some one knocking at the door of her own room, advised an immediate separation, lest a discovery should frustrate all their hopes.

Henrietta then instantly passed through the sliding board, and Adelaide, motioning

to Jaques to depart, hastened to return to her own room, still followed by the dog, while the old man escaped by the private passage.

CHAP. III.

“**So**, Mademoiselle,” cried Marcella, on perceiving that Adelaide had not returned without the manuscript, “then, after all, I left it behind me in my fright. Dear, dear, I have been so put to my wits end since you have been gone ! here’s been the Marquis looking for you ; he had got a packet in his hand, and was so earnest to see you, you can’t conceive ; how surprised he was at not finding you in your apartment !

apartment! so I did not like somehow to tell him you was in these old frightful rooms, and said that you was gone, I believed, either to the library or the music-room; and now he is just gone to those places to look for you; so, Mademoiselle, you had better slip into the music-room as soon as you can, and I can shew you a short way towards it."

Adelaide, aware of the consequences which would result from the least suspicion being attached to her absence by the Marquis, readily assented to Marcella's proposal, and suffered herself to be conducted to the music-room, a large saloon, elegantly fitted up in a style much more modern than any in the castle, but apparently much neglected.

"This room has not been used, Mademoiselle, since the death of the late Marchioness," said Marcella, "the mother of the Marquis; she was very fond of music, and often had charming concerts here; but now I have no hopes that it will ever come

into use again ; for I heard that the Marquis means to beautify the large western hall, and have all his balls and concerts there." She had hardly concluded her speech, when the Marquis himself entered, and she immediately withdrew.

Adelaide, who was at the moment seated by a harpsichord, turning over the leaves of an ancient music-book, raised her eyes toward him as he advanced, and was struck with the traces of the excessive agitation that marked his countenance.

" I have been seeking you throughout the castle, Adelaide," said he, " and I have suffered considerably from the dreadful apprehension that, alarmed by the cruel mysteries which have occurred since you have resided here, and by the barbarous persuasions and representations of your young English friend, you were attempting to find the means of flying from my protection.— Oh, Adelaide ! could you conceive how dear you are to my heart, you would feel convinced that no danger could assail you,
which

which I have power to repel. Nay, am I not even at this moment engaged in the painful task of delivering into your hand the letters of a man who would have deprived me of you for ever?"

He now presented to her several letters, the superscriptions of which were in the hand-writing of St. Croix. Adelaide received them with a silent curtesy, and rose to leave the room, when the Marquis eagerly taking her hand, entreated her to stay.

"Wherefore do you fly me thus, cruel Adelaide?" he said; "am I still doomed to be the object of your suspicions and hatred? what do you fear?"

Adelaide, much agitated by the mournfully impressive manner of the Marquis, and his embarrassing questions, again sat down, with her eyes fixed on the letters.—After a short pause, the Marquis said—

"I detain you to hear my apology for my wild and incoherent conduct yesterday morning, Adelaide. Say that you pardon the alarm I occasioned you; at a future

period I will explain the nature of the secret which I was on the point of madly revealing to you yesterday. But I entreat you, if you have the faintest sense of compassion for an unhappy man, whose wretchedness is now complete, that you will promise to sometimes think of me with pity, and endeavour to feel for me those sentiments of regard to which, as a relation, I have a claim."

Adelaide was on the point of replying, in a manner which she hoped might console the mind of her unhappy uncle, when accidentally raising her eyes, she found his fixed upon her with an expression of so much passionate tenderness, that she felt involuntarily confused, and remained silent.

The Marquis took her hand, sighed deeply, and, in a tone of emotion, said, "You do not reply to my wishes—you will not consider me as a friend, a protector, to whom your happiness is most dear. Ah! do not increase the miseries of my
fate,

fate, by adding your hatred to the burden of calamity which must speedily bend me to the grave."

"I do not hate you, my Lord," replied Adelaide, drawing away her hand, which the Marquis had earnestly retained, while she spoke; "I can never hate the brother of my dear lamented parent; nor is it, I hope, a crime that I cannot feel for him all those sentiments of affection and confidence which I wish to experience for one so nearly related to me."

"And how, amiable and lovely girl, how have I deserved this? Anxious for your felicity, anxious that you should retain in the world the character of chaste and feminine delicacy, to which your principles and conduct so well entitled you, I rejected the imprudent proposal of St. Croix to obtain my consent to your nuptials, ere the expiration of the year, so piously devoted by you to the memory of your father; and because a wild and unthinking young man, equally selfish in his passion, and regardless

of the delicacy which he ought to have revered, has thought proper to brand my name with the most odious suspicions, and avail himself of the superstition which but too generally reigns in gloomy mansions like this, you condemn and shun me as a monster. Is this just, Adelaide? Have you been instructed to think and act thus precipitately by those dear parents whose loss you deplore? Oh no! my brother was ever ingenuous, unsuspecting, and generously disdained to form his judgment on the shallow and erroneous foundation of appearances: confide to me the tales which have been whispered to your artless mind; permit me by the knowledge, if not of my accusers, at least of their accusations, to vindicate my honour, and to prove that I am not unworthy of your esteem."

He paused, and regarding Adelaide with the most penetrating look, he read in her lovely and expressive features the struggle of her mind, and her reluctance to continue the subject.

"My

“ My appeal to your candour and justice are then in vain, Adelaide ; and you refuse to me what you would readily grant to the greatest criminal—the precious privilege of vindicating his innocence.—Then I have nothing more to hope, but from the prospect that time may lead you to think more favourably of me.—Unjust and cruel Adelaide.”

He arose and walked about the room in extreme agitation.

Ingenuous by nature and education, it required all the mental arguments which cautious prudence could suggest to prevent Adelaide from informing the Marquis of every circumstance which had come to her knowledge ; and, on his arising, she still sat silent, embarrassed and irresolute. His tone of voice, his manner, and his arguments, wore the stamp of sincerity ; and as her timid glance fell on him as he paced the room, she could scarcely repress the ardent wish of daring to tell him all she had heard, and all she dreaded. In every ex-

terior respect the Marquis so much resembled her father, that Adelaide never beheld him without experiencing the deepest regret at not being able to view him with that affection and respect she wished to feel for him ; and in the present instance, she was only deterred by the consciousness that her youth and inexperience rendered her very incapable of judging with penetration or certainty whether the Marquis was really deserving that she should consider him as a friend, from making him in some degree acquainted with her knowledge of the horrible discovery which the Count St. Croix had made in the vaulted cellar.

While these reflections passed rapidly in the mind of Adelaide, the Marquis occasionally observed her with scrutinizing attention ; and he was too excellent a judge of the contradictory ideas which agitated her mind, not to indulge the hope that he might still succeed in gaining her confidence,

dence; provided he could plausibly explain away some of the mysterious occurrences on which her ill opinion of himself was founded. However, he did not think the present a proper opportunity of renewing the subject ; but approaching her with an air of reviving calmness, he said,—

“ As I well know that all further efforts to incline you to think of me as I wish, will prove unsuccessful, till time has convinced you of the interest I take in your concerns, I will not again intrude on your attention the subject of our recent conversation.— All I request is, that you will endeavour to regain that sweet serenity of mind and amiable cheerfulness of disposition, which I am confident once particularly distinguished you, my dear niece. You must no longer lead this life of extreme seclusion ; myself and the Marchioness, anxious that you should partake of those lively amusements so well adapted to your age, and to which your presence will add a thousand attractions, have determined to emerge from
our

our solitary habits, and, by drawing around us a circle of fashion and gaiety, render your residence with us, if not entirely pleasing, at least supportable, till the return of the Count, whose absence you so unkindly attribute to me. But recollect, Adelaide (he added, with an air serious and mildly reproachful) that had I been inclined to commit an act so mean and treacherous, that I could not have executed such a plan in the course of six or seven days, the space of time between that in which I gave my consent to your union, and the night of the Count's departure. Indeed, the conduct of the Count has been so singularly unpleasant towards me, that there are few in my situation who would not think themselves justified in punishing such insulting behaviour, by depriving him of all hope of ever calling you his. But I shall not act thus. Adelaide's happiness must ever form the rule of my conduct, and for her sake I shall cease to remember the vexation that petulant young man has occasioned me."

"And

“And had the Count St. Croix no real cause for the terrors which influenced him to hazard incurring your displeasure, my Lord?” said Adelaide, raising her eyes with a look of penetration and enquiry to the face of her uncle.—“Was there no terrible and mysterious deed discovered, which might lead him to fear for my safety and repose? Do you forget the alarming object which I myself beheld on the night—”

“Cease, I entreat, Adelaide,” said the Marquis, the pale hue of terror stealing over his features. “I perceive that St. Croix has been faithless to his promise; but the knowledge of the circumstance with which he has so cruelly and so infamously furnished you, allows me an opportunity of declaring to you that I am innocent of the death of the unhappy victim whose remains are concealed in the vault.”

He then, in the most solemn and awful manner, pronounced a tremendous oath, in confirmation of the truth of his declaration.

“And

“And Durancy?” involuntarily demanded Adelaide, as he arose from his knee.

“Durancy!” exclaimed the Marquis, starting; “Durancy—it was not Durancy, but—Torturing, unfeeling girl, how much further to perdition will you drive me—begone; you have awakened feelings in my soul which all your fascinations cannot calm. Leave me, I entreat, and be silent.”

Adelaide, scarcely daring to cast another glance on the Marquis, who had fallen prostrate in an agony on the floor, hastily fled from the room, and regained her apartments, overwhelmed by amazement and terror.

CHAP. IV.

WHEN Adelaide had in some degree conquered the excessive agitation which her recent interview with the Marquis had excited, she eagerly commenced the perusal of St. Croix's letters: they were still dated from the post towns on his way to Toulon, where his regiment lay, and contained nothing but repeated and impassioned expressions of grief at his enforced absence, and fears for her health. He acknowledged the receiving her reply to his last packet, and importuned her to write to him immediately, and address her letter to him at Toulon. The cautiously avoid-
ing

ing all reference to the peculiar points on which Adelaide had expected that in his second letter he would not fail to touch on, led her to indulge more than a hope that the Chevalier de Valmont must have some private letter to deliver to her; and she bitterly regretted that the Marchioness had thought proper to request her to remain in her own apartments; she should therefore be compelled to wait with patience till the morrow, when she promised, if possible, to meet Henrietta in the deserted chamber.

The letters of St. Croix were, during the course of the day, read over repeatedly, and answered in that style of delicate and modest tenderness in which Adelaide so well knew how to express the artless feelings of her soul. One letter, devoid of any hint or explanation of her situation in the castle, was intended to pass through the hands of the Marquis, and another, fully explanatory of all her plans and hopes, was
destined

destined to be dispatched to her Henry by the Chevalier de Valmont.

When Adelaide had finished her letters, she put them carefully aside, and went into the anti-chamber, where she found Marcella most impatiently waiting her appearance, as the dinner was fast cooling.

The bright morning had been succeeded by a gloomy and rainy afternoon, and Adelaide, drawing near to the blazing wood fire, sat down to her repast, while Marcella, with more than her usual volubility, entertained her with accounts of the alterations and improvements going forward in the castle, and the expected fetes, which she said were to begin with a masked ball.

Adelaide, partly absorbed in her own reflections, paid no particular attention to Marcella's delighted prattle, till the mention of the masked ball suggested the idea, that should it take place before the time fixed for the departure of De Valmont, she might easily escape in disguise during the hurry of such a night. Elated with this sudden

sudden hope, Adelaide now enquired when this ball was to take place, and learned, to her extreme disappointment, that it was fixed for that day month. However, she reflected, that should her hope of getting sooner away fail, she might at all events concert some plan which she should probably be able to execute on that night, and no longer considered the new arrangements of the Marquis with such disgust as she had done previous to their affording her a hope of escape. Soon after dinner she retired to her chamber, and with more calmness than she had for some time experienced, began to consider the singular conduct of the Marquis, and to reflect on what had passed during her interview with him in the morning. As the apparent sincerity of his manner, his deep distress, and the frightful account of his character, which she had heard from Marcella, occurred to her memory, she found herself more than ever perplexed and embarrassed, by her attempts to develope his real dispositions.

That

That he had been extremely guilty, she could not doubt ; yet she felt inclined to believe that he was not the depraved and abandoned being that the hints she had received had led her to suppose ; at least she concluded that his penitence and secret remorse were unfeigned, and that some involvement with the Chevalier Bionville, whom she hesitated not to imagine was the partner of the Marquis's crimes, still held the latter in bonds which he could not for the present break. But however the wild starts of grief, and the apparent internal wretchedness of the Marquis, induced Adelaide to hope he was not so entirely lost as she had at first feared, yet she could not avoid experiencing a very sensible pleasure in the reflection, that she had not been led by his persuasions or reproaches to say any thing which might betray her intention of seeking another home as soon as possible.

Late in the evening, as she sat reading a devotional book, with Marcella and Cæsar by her side, a gentle tap was heard at the door

door of the outward room, which, after a few minutes hesitation on the part of Marcella, was opened by her, and Jaques entered.

"I am come, Mademoiselle," cried the old man, respectfully addressing Adelaide, who had accompanied the half terrified Marcella, "I am come, Mademoiselle, by the orders of my Lord, to try to coax this troublesome dog from your apartments; but I warrant I shan't be able to keep him long. However, if Mademoiselle will permit me to come and fetch him away sometimes, I may be able to make him less intruding."

Adelaide now expressed a wish that the dog should be permitted to come to her rooms whenever he liked, and Jaques promised he would contrive that he should have liberty to do so, and then calling to the dog, said,—“Will Mademoiselle pardon my presumption, but if you would just walk to the door, young lady, he would follow

follow you there ; and if I can once get him out of the room——.”

There was a significance in the look of Jaques, as he made this request, that implied more than a mere wish of Adelaide's assisting him in withdrawing Cæsar, and she instantly walked to the door, while the dog closely following, gave Jaques an opportunity, as he stooped to catch the animal by the collar, to slip into the hand of his young lady a small packet, which she instantly concealed, as he left the room with the dog, who, in less than an hour, returned.

The moment Jaques departed, Adelaide returned to the seat she had quitted, and fearful of exciting the suspicions of Marcella, by abruptly retiring to her chamber, she again took up the book she had been reading ; but her ideas were now so unsettled, that she could not pay any attention to the pious exhortations it contained, and not chusing to lightly glance over a book of devotion, she laid it down, and
sat

sat for awhile in all the uneasy anxiety of suspense.

Marcella, now perceiving that her lady was not inclined to continue the perusal of her religious exercises, proposed her reading the manuscript of the Nun of Miserecordia, but Adelaide involuntarily shrunk from this request; and saying that she hoped a few minutes passed in solitude would remove her ennui, took a light, and retired into her chamber, the door of which she fastened, and then took out the packet given her by Jaques.

The envelope contained a small packet, superscribed in the writing of De Valmont, and an unsealed paper. As Adelaide expected and hoped, she found, in a letter from De Valmont, one from St. Croix, in which he renewed all his arguments to induce her to leave the castle. De Valmont's letter was an acknowledgment of having received from Henrietta her assent to his plans for her removal, and a high commendation of Jaques, who, he said, was

now fully possessed of his confidence, and had already pointed out the most secure mode of proceeding.

On looking over the unsealed paper, Adelaide found that it was written by Jaques, and she instantly recognised, in the hand-writing of the ancient porter, that of the mysterious correspondent of St. Croix.

After apologising for the liberty he had taken, in addressing her, Jaques continued, "The first moment you entered the castle, my dear and respected young lady, I guessed that you would very soon be involved in some trouble, and I did not wait long to find that I was right; for on the second day I overheard my Lord Marquis tell the Chevalier Bionville that you was the most lovely and innocent creature that he had ever beheld, and that he had conceived a passion for you, which was likely to be his ruin. Now do not start in affright, young lady; this would be very bad indeed, if things were really as they seem to be; but we must not believe appearances, you

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know, Mademoiselle. But to proceed— Bionville stormed and raged about the room, and swore, that if ever he heard the Marquis again say such an absurd and improbable thing, he would instantly leave him to his fate. This was enough; the Marquis immediately laughed, and said, that he had uttered so ridiculous a speech, only to see how far he could impose upon the Chevalier with such a ridiculous and unnatural tale. They were now friends again, and went out together. After what had been thus heard, young lady, I set about devising some means of informing the Count St. Croix, your intended Lord, that he had best take you away from St. Vivier's view as fast as he could: and now the Count did receive warning billets: but fearing that the advice contained in these mysterious billets might not sufficiently impress on the mind of the Count the necessity of almost immediately removing you, Mademoiselle, I sent him a request to meet a friend at a certain part of
the

the castle, at midnight, and first to dress himself in a suit of clothes he would find in the deserted rooms of the North wing—But—” the old man thus proceeded—“ but oh! had my dear master, your noble father, lived, all might have been well: but we must not repine; the innocent are never forsaken if they seek the help of Heaven. I may live to see justice and vengeance overtake the guilty, and the unsuspecting and oppressed restored to their rights. Keep up your spirits, my dear, good young lady, and do not want courage to fly from ruin.”

The letter of Jaques filled the pure mind of Adelaide with emotions of the most new and terrific nature. Suspicions darted across her imagination, from which her soul recoiled with horror; and when she recalled to her recollection the impassioned gaze of the Marquis, his uncommon solicitude to please her, and his anxiety to impress her mind with sentiments of affection

towards himself, she trembled with increasing horror and dismay ; sickly disgust and langour stole over her senses, and she had nearly fainted ; but slowly recovering from the effects of this shock, she raised her eyes to Heaven, and, in the spirit of fervent zeal, prayed that her miserable uncle might be relieved from the abominable and detestable sentiments which the words of Jaques had too clearly intimated that he cherished.

The tears of piety relieved the dreadfully distressed mind of the amiable girl ; and she sought to calm the perturbation of her feelings, by rejoicing in the near prospect she possessed, of being soon far beyond the power of the Marquis, whose idea was now become almost insupportable.

The voice of Marcella, who, alarmed at the lengthened absence of her young lady, had fancied that she was indisposed, calling her at the door of her chamber, interrupted the painful train of reflection into which Adelaide had fallen. Hastily folding the
letters

letters she had just been perusing, she carefully locked them up, and opened the room door, saying that she had been so much occupied with the subject of her meditations, that she had not been aware of the swift flight of time.

“Occupied, Mademoiselle!” exclaimed her ancient attendant, in a tone of surprise, “why you look so troubled and woeful, that you seem not to have received much benefit from your devotions. But here’s Jaqueline has brought you some nice supper; and if you will try and eat a morsel, you may be better; and here’s Cæsar too come back, poor fellow.”

Adelaide silently went into the anti-chamber, and, to avoid suspicion, sat down to table; but the secret emotion she suffered effectually prevented her from tasting the repast; and complaining of a violent head-ach, with which indeed she was in reality afflicted, she retired to bed.

CHAP. V.

THE looks of Adelaide, on the following morning, afforded convincing proofs that sleep had been far from her pillow in the night; and eager to avail herself of the plea which her apparent indisposition afforded, of not seeing the Marquis, she directed Marcella to take to him the letter she had written to the Count St. Croix, which he had promised to send off himself, he never permitting any letters to leave the castle but what were dispatched by himself to the post at Grenoble.

Marcella, after an absence of nearly an hour's continuance, returned with a billet
from

from the Marquis, who, she declared, looked almost as ill and as distressed as her young lady.—“I declare, Mademoiselle, I don’t know what to make of him. Whatever his faults may have been to others, I am sure I cannot think that he will ever venture to wrong you ; for he seemed almost distracted when I told him how badly you looked, and how you was always weeping, and scarcely ever slept. Oh how he did sigh and mutter to himself, and strike his forehead !—and then he asked a thousand questions.”

Adelaide, turning away with an unconquerable emotion of disgust and horror, sat down, while the increasing paleness of her countenance, by seeming to imply that she was overpowered by a sudden weakness, interrupted Marcella, who now entirely forgot the Marquis, and became sensible only of the situation of her young lady, whose gentle manners, and sweet disposition, had entirely won her affections.

When Adelaide recovered from her tran-

sient oppression, Marcella requested he to read the billet which the Marquis had sent, and, with infinite reluctance, she opened it, but found that its contents expressed only impassioned regrets at her illness, and advice that she would walk out on the ramparts of the castle, whither he would himself attend her, unless for the present she preferred the attendance of her woman.

Adelaide delayed not a moment ere she declined the attendance of the Marquis whom she coldly thanked for his permission of walking on the ramparts, but did not mention whether she intended to avail herself of the liberty thus offered; and vexed that she had been under the necessity of sending away Marcella a second time, she was anxiously pacing her room when the old woman hastily returned, and informed her that she had met the Marquis at the end of the gallery, and that he was coming to enquire after her health in person.

Adelaide

Adelaide sunk almost senseless on her chair, and the first object she beheld on opening her eyes was the Marquis, who was bending over her with looks which expressed the utmost anxiety and wildness.— On perceiving her revive, he uttered several expressions of transport; but the animation of his manner was quickly checked by the horror-struck look of Adelaide, and the convulsive shiver which agitated her frame, as she turned away from him.

After a momentary silence, he said—
 “Were I not certain that the reception
 you give me, Mademoiselle St. Viviers,
 can only be the effect of some singular
 caprice, I should not hesitate to say how
 much you offend and grieve me by this
 conduct. Say, Adelaide, is there aught
 within my power to grant which you fear I
 will refuse you? I will endeavour to pro-
 cure the return of the Count St. Croix.—
 Do you sigh for the society of your young
 English friend? Reluctant as I feel to in-
 dulse you in this point, yet, preferring
 D 5 your

your tranquillity to my own gratification, I will even permit Mademoiselle Vernor to see you occasionally. Your health and spirits will be destroyed by this incessant repining: inform me only how I can contribute to your happiness, that I may convince you that I feel the deepest interest in effecting all that you can wish."

The Marquis's manner was now so serious, so paternally kind, that the confusion of Adelaide abated; yet earnest to be relieved from his presence, she faintly thanked him for his proposal of allowing her sometimes to see her friend, whose society she intimated would undoubtedly alleviate the depression of her mind; and then hinting that her indisposition was increasing, she arose, and supported by Marcella, retired into the interior room. The varying hectic, which passed with transient gleams over her pale cheek, and the evident tremor of her frame, assured the Marquis that she did indeed labour under personal, as well as mental indisposition; and he immediately

immediately proceeded to the apartments of his lady, to whom he rather exaggerated the situation of Adelaide, as a plea for so soon deviating, in some degree, from his arrangements respecting Henrietta, who was now summoned to the very unexpected pleasure of being requested by the Marquis to instantly proceed to the apartments of Mademoiselle St. Viviers, whom he represented as most earnest to behold her friend.

Henrietta needed not a repetition of this request; she immediately dropped her curtsey to the Marchioness, and left the room; but she had scarcely crossed the great hall, ere she was overtaken by the Marquis, who requested her attention for a few minutes.

Chagrined as was Henrietta at this interruption to her speed, she was, however, too well pleased with the Marquis, to let him perceive that she would have been much better satisfied with being allowed to proceed, and therefore listened with an air

of patient attention, while he entered into a long explanation of some parts of his conduct, and the affliction which he suffered from the caprice and prejudiced dislike of his niece, whom he now vouchsafed to say could not have been influenced to act as she did by Miss Vernor, to whose care and advice he begged to recommend Adelaide ; and hoped that she would, by the representations and arguments of her friend, be soon induced to alter her opinions respecting a relation, to whom she was so justly dear.

Henrietta curtsied in silence to the well-turned compliments of the Marquis ; and, after assuring him that she would never lead Mademoiselle St. Viviers from her duty, was suffered to hasten to the apartment of her friend, with whom she had liberty to continue till the next day.

It may easily be imagined with what joy the two lovely girls found themselves once more at liberty to converse with freedom. The first moments of their meeting resembled

sembled the re-union of long parted friends, although they had seen each other on the preceding morning. But these pleasing emotions were transient ; for the astonishment and dismay with which Henrietta read the letter of Jaques, almost exceeded that which Adelaide had endured. A mutual silence of horror succeeded the perusal.— At length Henrietta, starting from a reverie, into which she had suddenly fallen, said, “ The horrible and singular information which this paper contains, has given me the greatest shock I ever received in my life ; but, on reflection, I cannot give it credit.— The old man may have been mistaken.— The affection which the Marquis certainly seems to have conceived for you, is too openly displayed and expressed, to partake of the nature of other sentiments than those which he ought to feel for you.— Yesterday, at dinner, he spoke of you to his lady as one of the most amiable and lovely girls in the world ; and, with an appearance of sincerity and regret, which

I cannot believe could be only assumed, he mentioned the absence of the Count St. Croix ; and added, that although the conduct of your lover had not been such as to give him any claims to his good wishes, yet, as he perceived that his absence had very much affected your health, he would take immediate measures to hasten his return to the castle, which he imagined could be accomplished, provided his regiment had not already been ordered abroad on some secret expedition, which I think cannot be the case, as he received no intimation to that effect in his letter of recall."

" But certainly," said Adelaide, " that sudden order to join his regiment, if not the effect of treachery, must have been occasioned by some unforeseen destination of the regiment."

" Do not mistake me, Adelaide," replied Henrietta ; " you must not suppose, because I cannot force myself to believe that your uncle is such a monster of depravity as this letter represents him, that I mean to
say

say he is a just and virtuous character.—
No! I believe there can be but little doubt
of his having contrived the recall of the
Count to the army; but this was done
with the view of perpetuating the family
name. This I am enabled to say almost
with certainty; for the Marchioness, who
seems rather prejudiced against the Count,
hinted something of that nature a few days
since, and informed me that it had been the
intention of the Marquis, when he learned
the death of your father, and that you were
thrown entirely upon his protection, to
break off your engagement with the Count,
and endeavour to unite you to some noble-
man, who would agree to relinquish his
own name and title, and bear that of St.
Viviers. But as the affair now stands,
added the Marchioness, such a proceeding
is impossible, your extreme attachment to
the Count rendering any attempt of the
kind equally cruel and unavailing. Now,
that the Marquis, whatever may be his pro-
fessions to the contrary, may still wish to
accomplish

accomplish this plan, I do not think unlikely ; and indeed the concourse of company about to be invited and admitted to the castle, appears to sanction such an idea. As to yielding any credit to the improbable and unnatural supposition, that your uncle can have conceived for you any other sentiments than those which your near relationship to each other authorises him to feel and express, I think would be absurd. Indeed, I am rather inclined to imagine that his extreme anxiety to make you believe that he bears for you the most paternal regard, proceeds from a view of forwarding his designs of still breaking off your union with St. Croix. Consider, there is no male heir to transmit the name of St. Viviers to posterity ; and is it not most probable that such a man as the Marquis would not fail of devising any means in his power for preventing the extinction of that name and title, of which he so frequently boasts, as the most ancient and honourable, equally renowned

renowned for military glory and splendid national virtues?"

The innocent Adelaide felt too much happiness in encouraging the idea that the good old Jaques must have been mistaken in his dreadful surmise respecting the sentiments of the Marquis, not to immediately coincide with Henrietta in attributing the whole to the error of the porter; and although she could not avoid shuddering at the thought of the Marquis's duplicity, in assuring her that he would forward her union with St. Croix, while at the same time it seemed but too evidently his intention to separate them for ever, yet she considered the latter evil as the least of the two; and firmly trusting that an all-gracious Providence would restore her to her Henry, she felt truly grateful to Heaven for being relieved from the horrible dread of having inspired the Marquis with a passion, which in him could not but be equally monstrous and abominable.

CHAP. VI.

IN the communication of their mutual distress, and in planning many little schemes for avoiding pursuit in their flight, the young friends found the day pass rapidly. As the evening closed in, the wind rose in loud and sudden gusts, which encircled the castle, and seemed to shake its lofty towers to their foundation, while torrents of rain dashed against the casements, and added a rattling din to the hollow roaring of the tempest.

“What a dreadful night is this, young ladies!” said Marcella, as Adelaide and Henrietta approached the warm hearth, and
drew

drew their chairs closer to the cheering blaze of the wood fire ; “ this is just such a night as is described in the story of the Sister of Mercy.”

“ The Sister of Mercy ! ” exclaimed Henrietta, looking at Adelaide for the explanation of Marcella’s words.

“ An old legend,” replied Adelaide, turning pale, “ which Marcella incessantly importunes me to read, and which I have not yet had the courage to do ; but as you are here, Henrietta, I will attempt it this night, for I may not again have such an opportunity as the present.”

“ No,” said Henrietta, “ you shall not exhaust your spirits with reading aloud.—Suffer me to read this wonderful tale, for wonderful it must be, if Marcella is so anxious to hear it.”

“ Wonderful as it may be, Mademoiselle Henrietta,” observed the old woman, peevishly, “ I can assure you that very pious persons have often said that there is but too much reason to fear it will turn
out

out no fable. And there's Mademoiselle Adelaide herself has dreamed of the terrible Nun since she has come to the castle."

While Marcella spoke she arose, and reaching the manuscript from the table, put it into the hands of Henrietta, who, though she disguised her feelings under an assumed gaiety, was nevertheless sensibly affected by the singularity of finding in the castle a tale, the title of which but too awfully reminded her of the terrible events which were connected with what she had heard of the Nun of the Miserecordia at Lisbon. She opened the dusty leaves of the manuscript, but found an involuntary terror and solemnity steal over her mind, which seemed to take from her the power of utterance, and she had some difficulty in pronouncing some words on the title-page, which had arrested her attention, and which were—"Good Christian, when you read the sad history of Agnes de Aubigne, otherwise a Sister of the Order of Miserecordia, we pray thee to say an Ave for the repose
of

of her soul, as thou hopest that thy repentance may be acceptable."

Henrietta's religion forbade her compliance with this request; but Adelaide, with all the piety and fervour which oftentimes animated her soul, repeated the Ave Maria, and Marcella followed her example, while Miss Vernor leaned her hand on the table, and in her heart prayed for the felicity of the departed. This duty ended, Marcella observed that the candles burnt dim, and that the fire was expiring: more lights and billets of wood were now procured; and this little interruption gave Henrietta time to regain composure to proceed with the narrative, which she found no small trouble in decyphering—It began as follows:—

The History of Sister Agnes.

A SHORT time after the battle of Pavia, in which Francis the First met with defeat
and

and captivity, a young nobleman, who had escaped from the slaughter, with which the Imperialists in Italy pursued the steps of the French, was taken suddenly ill at a small town through which he was passing, in his way to the castle of his ancestors.

Being a stranger, and destitute of money or jewels, he was carried from the inn to an hospital, which was usually attended by a pious sisterhood of Beguines. Among the nuns was one called Sister St. Agnes : she was the most beautiful young woman of her time ; the sun never shone on a fairer lily than that lovely one.—Piety and innocence adorned all her words and actions ; and, though of noble birth, her humility was such that she was ever eager to perform the most menial offices of her station. She was beloved and adored as a saint by the whole community ; and it was thought, that when the superior should die, which, as she was very old, was an event daily expected, that the youth of Sister St. Agnes, for she was but two-and-twenty, would not
be

be an obstacle to her being nominated her successor.

All was thus serene and happy in the convent, when the young nobleman was brought to the hospital. Sister St. Agnes was one of the first that went to attend on this sick stranger, who was in a high fever, owing to a wound he had received in battle having been neglected, and the fatigue he had lately endured. For a month, St. Agnes and another nun continued to attend the young nobleman, who said his name was Reginald St. Viviers, of Dauphiny. As soon as the Marquis was known, he found a friend in the town, who had been well acquainted with his father, and this gentleman supplied him with money, and every other convenience, a kindness which was ill bestowed.

As Reginald recovered, it was observed by several of the elder nuns that St. Agnes grew pale and melancholy, and often wept bitterly in private; and, as soon as the stranger went away, she took to her bed,
and

and had like to have died : and it would have been well if she had. But, poor thing, she recovered again ; but she was quite changed in her disposition, and was so restless, gloomy, and distant, that none of the nuns much cared to be with her.— About three months after this she was suddenly missed, and no soul could tell what had become of her, till one of the sisters, who mostly had accompanied her to the hospital, recollected that she had once suspected that Reginald, Marquis of St. Viviers, had fallen deeply in love with Sister St. Agnes, who, it was soon feared, had returned his love, and had either suffered herself to be carried off by him, or was voluntarily gone after him.

Proper persons were sent to the castle of St. Viviers, to claim her and her wicked lover ; but when they arrived there, they found that the Marquis had been some time in Paris, whither they immediately proceeded, and demanded of him to deliver the Sister St. Agnes into their hands.

The

The Marquis seemed at first confused, but he quickly recovered, and denied all knowledge of the unhappy St. Agnes; and although he was confined for three months, and even underwent the question to make him discover, yet he still loudly declared his innocence, and was at length set at liberty.

Two years now rolled away without bringing any tidings of St. Agnes, when one night, it being the eve of All Saints, one of the nuns, keeping the vigil near midnight in the chapel, alarmed the whole community with the most piercing shrieks, and on several of the nuns running to see what was the matter, they found the poor nun, who had been a good friend to Sister St. Agnes, lying on the ground in fits, from which, when she was recovered, she solemnly declared that she had seen St. Agnes, all covered with blood, enter the great aisle, and that she had come up close to where she was kneeling before the image of the patron saint, and, baring her bosom,

had displayed a deep wound, from which issued torrents of blood, after which she uttered a dreadful shriek, and sunk into the earth. The nun then knew she had seen a spirit, and she fell into convulsions. This strange and woeful account spread consternation throughout the convent, although some of the nuns could not but believe that Sister Victoria had been overcome by long fasting, and had only fancied that she had seen St. Agnes. But there was soon a terrible proof to the contrary, for, on the following night, the most death-like cries and moans were heard in the convent, and——.

“What’s that?—Oh! did you hear that terrible shriek?” exclaimed Marcella, starting up, and clinging to the chair on which Adelaide sat.

“It was the wind,” said Henrietta.—“Hark how it sweeps along the battlements.”

“There! there again!” cried the terrified Marcella, while Adelaide, faintly articulating, “Oh Henrietta, that was indeed a,
dreadful

dreadful shriek!" sunk into the arms of her friend.

Henrietta, sensible only of the fear of alarming Adelaide, had not attended to the sounds which mingled with the roaring wind; and happily attributing the assertions of both Mademoiselle St. Viviers and Marcella to the impression which the story she was reading had made upon their minds, she positively insisted that they were yielding to a weak and groundless terror; and, by assuming more courage and indifference than she really felt, succeeded at length in her endeavours to recover them from their excessive alarm, when Adelaide, half abashed at her own weakness, softly begged her to proceed.

"What, will you hear any more before you have had your supper, Mademoiselle?" exclaimed Marcella; "why, you will be so faint, that you will never be able to listen to the end of it, I'm sure."

Henrietta, now joining her advice to Marcella's, they partook of some bread,

dried fruits, and some wine, which had already been provided by the ancient attendant in the adjoining room; nor was Marcella excluded from sharing in this repast, their still unsubdued fear having banished all distinction. When once more returned to the replenished fire, Adelaide, after calling Cæsar closer to her feet, proposed to Henrietta the continuance of the tale.—As she spoke, the clock of the castle struck twelve, and at the same time a loud burst of wind howled through the long gallery.

“You had better hear no more of this narrative to-night, Adelaide,” said Henrietta; “the gloom of this hour, and the impetuosity of the tempest, will assist in working on your imagination till you again sink under new terrors.”

Adelaide, however, with all that tenacity with which the human mind attaches itself to the wonderful and terrific, insisted on her friend's proceeding; and Henrietta could no longer refuse.

“Where was I interrupted?” said she.

“Oh

" Oh here ——."

The most death-like cries and groans were heard in the convent: the horror-stricken nuns left their beds, and assembled in the refectory, where they passed the night in the utmost dread and confusion, the cries being distinctly heard at intervals. In the morning, several very pious confessors and priests were summoned to a long consultation, when it was agreed, that two of the most holy should watch all the ensuing night in the chapel. These devout monks entered upon their awful task at eleven o'clock, and continued in prayer till near twelve, when the figure of the miserable St. Agnes suddenly stood before them. Streams of blood still seemed to flow from her bosom, and stain her long white garments, and her cheeks were deadly pale, her eyes fixed, and her whole lovely face marked with death. Clasp- ing a crucifix to his breast, one of the monks, animated with holy courage, spoke to this frightful vision, and soon the soft and

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sweet,

sweet, but now hollow-toned voice of St. Agnes, was heard to pronounce the name of Reginald St. Viviers, and pointing to the wound in her bosom, she repeated the name, and slowly vanished in a vaporous mist.

The monks soon after quitted the chapel, and joined the superior and the nuns, who were all assembled in the parlour.

As they related all they had seen, every cheek was blanched with terror, and none hesitated to say, that Reginald St. Viviers must have been the murderer of the deceased sister St. Agnes. It was soon agreed that proper measures should be immediately taken to surprise and bring him to justice; and, on the following day, the two fathers, to whom the spirit had appeared, set out for St. Viviers' castle, where, on arriving, they found the wretched Reginald confined to his bed, in a delirious fever. Being admitted to his bedside, they too soon acquired a positive conviction that he had been the assassin of the luckless
St.

St. Agnes ; for, in his wild ravings, he confessed the deed.

On the third day after the monk had been in the castle, the Marquis recovered his intellects ; but this restoration of his senses was only a certain forerunner of his death, which happened in less than two hours after.

The confessor of the Marquis, soon learning the cause of the monks visit, gave into their hands a large and valuable casket of jewels, and several sums of money, an immediate bequest to the convent of Beguines.

The fathers now departed, and, on their return to the convent, gave the casket into the hands of the Abbess, who, on opening it, found, amid the rich and splendid jewels it contained, a small bundle of papers, which, on opening, appeared to have been written by a friend of the Marquis, and was discovered to be a full confession of his guilt. It appeared from these papers that he had, as had been suspected, con-

ceived a violent passion for the beautiful Sister of Mercy, his attendant, and having failed in every effort to seduce her, he concealed his disappointment under an appearance of resignation and grief, and left the town, fully determined to take her off, as soon as his design could be accomplished, without exciting suspicion. This was at length effected, and she was conveyed to Paris, and placed in an old dilapidated building, inclosed with high court walls, in the Fauxbourg St. Germain, where several rooms had been properly fitted up for her reception. Here the lovely nun was presented with the most splendid clothes and jewels, but she refused all, and exerted the most proper and firm spirit, till after five days she was visited by the Marquis.

At first St. Agnes keenly reproached him for his cruelty, in taking her from her pious home, and bringing her to such a place; but alas! she loved. The Marquis was young, graceful, extremely handsome and insinuating, and St. Agnes but too
soon

soon forgot her sacred vows, and sacrificed her virtue to a villain; but 'tis probable that he would not have succeeded, had not his sufferings in the Bastile pleaded for him in the heart of St. Agnes, with an irresistible eloquence.

Not daring to remove her, lest a discovery should ensue, the Marquis secretly visited her in the Fauxbourg St. Germain for several months, and his passion seemed to have suffered no abatement; till having been one evening introduced to the beautiful young Countess de Villecour, and being favourably received by that lady, he instantly resolved on soliciting her hand, she being a widow; and from that moment the fate of the undone St. Agnes seemed decided. Passionately attached to the Countess, who was as amiable as she was lovely, he so ardently urged his suit, that they were married in about six weeks; and the Marquis immediately quitted Paris with his charming bride, leaving poor St. Agnes friendless and deserted, and bearing

in her bosom an innocent proof of his perfidy and cruelty. Too soon she learned the fatal truth, and was seized with all the awfully silent madness of despair. Escaping from her prison, she contrived to reach St. Viviers, and arrived just as the Marquis was giving a luxurious banquet to the friends who had thronged to his castle, to behold his beautiful bride.

The wretched St. Agnes, with all that cunning which sometimes accompanies a derangement of intellect, contrived to enter the castle unobserved by the porter or any of the domestics ; and, after wandering about for some time, at length reached a magnificent saloon, where most of the company were assembled. Dazzled by the glare of the lights, and the gay and splendid appearance of every object around her, she had scarcely entered the room ere the wild and melancholy dejection of her madness was suddenly succeeded by the highest flight of phrenetic fury, and, with a loud and piercing shriek, she rushed into the
midst

midst of the brilliant assemblage, and flew towards the upper end of the apartment, where the Marquis and his lady were conversing with some of their friends. Falling back in alarm and astonishment, the gay crowd left a free passage for the unhappy maniac, whose youth and extraordinary beauty made her an object of equal wonder and admiration.

The Marquis, whose attention was drawn by the bustle, looked round, to ascertain the cause, just as St. Agnes reached the spot where he stood, and threw herself at his feet, beseeching him, in the most thrilling accents of woe, to make her his wife, or restore her innocence. With all the rapidity of delirious incoherence, she rambled from one subject to another : yet her unconnected and wild tale sufficiently explained the Marquis's crime, and her own situation, to the young Marchioness, who soon fainted ; while her Lord, confounded and horror-struck, had not power to move, but remained gazing, in apparent unconsciousness,

sciousness, on St. Agnes, who, still kneeling at his feet, made the saloon re-echo with her heart-rending cries and plaintive appeal.

The sight of some of the Marchioness's friends and attendants conveying their lady from the saloon, roused the Marquis from his state of gloomy terror, and spurning the hapless victim of his perfidious passion to the floor, he loudly summoned his servants, and commanded them to turn the unhappy maniac out of the castle. The remonstrances and entreaties of his friends could not succeed in preventing him committing this cruel act; and St. Agnes, rending the air with her shrieks, and struggling with almost supernatural force against the efforts of the servants who held her, was thrust out on' the bleak mountain, where the drifting snow, falling in large flakes, obscured the faintest light of the heavens.

Silent, and struck with horror and amazement, the company retired to their respective apartments, which had been pre-

NUN OF MISERECORDIA.

pared for them ; but the Marquis, instead of hastening to the apartment of his lady, privately left the castle, and proceeded to the southern rampart, where he had ordered two confidential servants, who were devoted to his will, to conduct the miserable St. Agnes, whose footsteps they had hastily been directed to follow.

On reaching the place of appointment, he, with internal exultation, found that his trusty servants had succeeded in securing the object of his fears, who was immediately conveyed by himself and them through several private subterraneous passages, to a dungeon underneath the great hall of the castle. Here the Marquis and one of the men remained with their victim, whom, with the most barbarous refinement in cruelty, Reginald held in his arms, and soothed with the tenderest expressions, till the return of the servant with a mattress and blankets, on which St. Agnes was suddenly thrown, and left to the most horrible solitude.

Thus

Thus having secured the person of the nun, the Marquis now flew to the apartment of his lady, who was just recovering from a succession of fainting fits ; and now his punishment in some degree was commenced ; for no sooner did the Marchioness behold him, than she shrieked, and, in a voice of affright and horror, commanded him not to approach her. But regardless of this behaviour, he placed himself beside her on the sofa, and at length succeeded in restoring her to some calmness, by uttering the most false and tremendous oaths, that he knew not who the maniac was, and that he had never beheld her till that night.

The young Marchioness tenderly loved her Lord—she was credulous, and her attendants, fearing that the excess of her emotions might endanger her life, joined in the assurances of the Marquis's innocence, who, for the moment, did not disdain such vouchers ; and they were reconciled, on condition that the poor girl, whom the Marquis acknowledged having turned out
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in the first ebullitions of his anger, at her having alarmed his adored Louisa, should be carefully sought for, and carried to a place of safety, where every effort should be used to restore her to her senses, and procure her justice on her seducer. All this, and more, the Marquis bound himself, by the most solemn vows, to perform ; and at length succeeded so well in persuading his lady of his honour and integrity, that she reproached herself a thousand times for having doubted his truth.

To pacify the anxious humanity of the Marchioness, servants had been immediately dispatched to seek the unhappy St. Agnes on the mountain ; but they returned at the dawn, in disappointment ; while, at each renewed and unsuccessful research, the Marquis affected the keenest regret and remorse for the rash act he had committed, in turning the poor wanderer out at such an hour, and on such a night. As St. Agnes, amid all her wild ravings, had never uttered the slightest expression which
could

could betray her being a nun, the Marquis did not find much difficulty in persuading his guests to believe that she was a stranger to him ; but although they exonerated him from the charge of seduction, yet they could not forbear hinting that he had displayed too little humanity towards the poor creature, whose hard fate, however, was soon forgotten, and all interest concerning her lost in the gay and unceasing dissipation which reigned in the castle for near a year.

Meanwhile, the wretched St. Agnes suffered the most strict confinement in the dungeon; and soon recovered her intellects; after which she learned to whom she was a prisoner. Most fortunately, with her recovered senses, her passion for the Marquis ceased; but she bore him no hatred, and submitted to her afflictions with all the humble piety and resignation which distinguishes true penitence; and although she was offered many little accommodations by her jailer, one of the Marquis's confidential

dential servants, yet she resolutely refused all, but such as might contribute to the welfare of the infant, which she expected soon to bring into the world. In the patient exercise of religious duties, she awaited that hour which should make her a mother; and, amid the horrors of her dungeon, she at length clasped to her bosom an infant boy, which, however, lived not an hour to repay the cares and griefs of its ruined parent.

An old woman, mother to one of the servants who usually attended her, had been introduced to her on this occasion, and, with infinite difficulty, saved her life. But St. Agnes scarcely ever spoke after the death of the infant. Her countenance alone evinced that she yet retained all the keen sensibility of her soul, and, once more in solitude, she inflicted upon herself the severest penances.

It was in the seventh month after her confinement, and one after the birth of her child, that St. Agnes sent to request that
the

the Marquis would come to the dungeon, as she had an important proposal to make to him. Reluctantly he attended to this request, and went to the dungeon, where St. Agnes received him with a placid self-humiliation of manner, which soon convinced him that her affection for himself was entirely subdued, and had given place to the most perfect repentance.

"I sent for you, Marquis," she said, after a little pause, "to assure you of my forgiveness, and to beg that you will suffer me to withdraw from this prison into some convent of penitents. Any vow you may require of silence, as to the past, I am willing to make. I no longer consider you as my seducer or persecutor : my own heart betrayed me, and that treacherous heart must be cleansed of its imperfections by the most rigid discipline. Say you, who my fatal want of resolution has made the partner of my guilt, will you aid me to expiate in this world the crime we have committed?"

By what dreadful influence is it that the
mind

mind of man seldom estimates any object but that which he either cannot obtain, or is on the point of losing. The cruel selfishness of a corrupt heart led the Marquis to hear the petition of St. Agnes with emotions of chagrin and regret. His wounded pride rendered the idea of being an object of indifference to her most galling; and the horrible idea of retaining and subjecting her to his pleasure, took a sudden and fatal possession of his breast.

The lamp, which burned in the dungeon, threw its glaring rays on the still beautiful face and form of St. Agnes; and though her countenance shone with the sweet expression of the pious chastity and meek humility which characterises the resemblance of a Madona, yet the vile Reginald saw in her a thousand new charms to seduce his senses; and, throwing himself at her feet, he vowed, in a transport of passion, never to part with her; and urged her to live with him a continued life of infamy; promising to remove her to a place of safety,

safety, where she should possess every pleasure which wealth could procure.

St. Agnes heard him with horror, and spurned him from her feet, while, with uplifted eyes and hands, she pronounced a sacred vow never to comply with so impious and dreadful a proposal.

Reginald, with a heart filled with fury and disappointment, rose up, and rushing from the dungeon, swore that she should again be his.

By nature inconstant, and by habit brutal and ferocious, he had, from his earliest years, known no guide but his passions, no law but his will; and, in the accomplishment of his designs, the means which promised him the surest success were ever resorted to, though ever so diabolical and base. His extreme passion for his lovely lady had been some months on the decline; and the expectation of soon being a father, and of having a male heir to inherit his estates, alone kept him obliging and attentive to her, who had, alas! but too soon
learned.

learned that the graces and beauty of his face and person had concealed from her the deformity of his mind till too late.

Intent on the utter destruction of the unhappy St. Agnes, he stole to her dungeon on the following midnight.

The poor sufferer, fatigued by long watching and fasting, had just closed her weary eye-lids, when the abandoned Reginald entered. The light of a lamp, which he carried, glaring full on her eyes as he approached her couch, aroused her from the faint slumber into which she had fallen. She shrieked, and starting from her mattress, beheld St. Viviers gazing on her with a look expressive of the dominion of every evil passion in his soul. Aspirating a prayer, she looked steadfastly on a dagger, which gleamed in his hand, and then said, "You are come to give me death?"

"St. Agnes knows the alternative," replied this monster; "will she repay my ardent love with yielding smiles, or, by her
scorn,

scorn, urge me to an act I would fain avoid?"

He approached nearer. She moved not; but as he attempted to clasp her in his arms, suddenly seized the dagger, and elevating her right hand, vowed to plunge it into his bosom, if he again approached her.

He swore, and caught her arm; she struggled, and called on Heaven for assistance. At this moment a slight noise was heard withoutside the door. It was but a loose stone falling; but the fears of St. Viviers leading him to apprehend that the cries of St. Agnes would discover all, filled up the measure of his crimes, and plunged the dagger into her bosom. The hapless victim fell; and the guilty Reginald was now so overwhelmed with horror and remorse, that it was some minutes ere he had recollection to withdraw the poniard from the bosom of St. Agnes, or to attempt stopping the blood, which flowed fast from her wound. All was in vain; she opened,
for

for a moment, her languid eyes, cast on her murderer a look of compassion, and seeming to implore of Heaven his pardon, expired; and the guilty Reginald rushed from the dungeon, leaving her remains to moulder there unburied.

Dreadful as was this event, it did not long affect the obdurate heart of St. Viviers. In two or three months after, his lady presented him with a son, and all recollection of St. Agnes was lost in dissipation and gaiety.

The Marchioness, who had nearly sunk under the cold neglect of her Lord, now daily recovered her health, animated by the delight which she took in her infant son.

It was on the night of the feast of his christening, that a most tremendous storm shook the lofty towers of the castle, and demolished the northern turret. The Marquis and his lady had retired to their chamber, but their slumbers were constantly broken by the howling gusts of wind, which swept along the old ramparts. Suddenly the

the storm ceased, and a death-like stillness succeeded. The Marchioness now felt the influence of sleep steal on her senses; but she was soon awakened by deep and heavy groans, which she found were uttered by her Lord, who clasped her hand with violence, and trembled excessively.

“Look there!” he cried, ere she had power to ask the cause of his alarm. She opened her eyes, and, at the foot of the bed, beheld the curtains drawn aside, while the visionary form of St. Agnes, rendered visible by a pale meteorous light, which surrounded her, appeared in all the ghastly guise of death, pointing to the wound in her bosom.

An indescribable sensation of awe and horror suspended the fleeting senses of the Marchioness, whose eyes were fixed immoveably on the dreadful object, in whose unsubstantial form she but too well recognised the shape and features of the maniac; while Reginald, convulsively trembling, closed his eyes, to exclude the fearful shade,

shade, when a low sepulchral voice was heard to say—

“ St. Viviers, impious and guilt-stained man—hear! The register of thy crimes is full; and in three days shalt thou be in the awful realms of eternity.—Prepare! Turn thine eyes from the earth, where thy grandeur shall fade, and thy name be extinct—extinct, when the last male descendant of the House of St. Viviers shall fall by the hand of a nun of the Order of Miserecordia.—Repent!—Prepare!”

The vision vanished, and the most solemn darkness and silence succeeded, broken only by the heavy moans of the appalled St. Viviers.

The Marchioness, who retained an incredible, but dreadful composure, violently rung her bell, and the alarmed attendants soon appearing, she left her bed, and, with her women, quitted the room, and taking her child, set off that very night for a seat of her father's, leaving Reginald insensible of her absence, and raving in the

wildest delirium, from which he recovered, however, in a few hours, and, in his confessions to his father director, related the dreadful circumstances which are here narrated, and which were added to by the information of the fathers Jerome and Louis, two pious monks, who came here from the convent to which the ruined sister St. Agnes belonged.

Little more remains to be said. The Marquis died before the three days were expired, but the Marchioness and her child are still living. How long the dreadful prediction may remain unaccomplished, no mortal can say ; but that the saints may guard our respected lady and the infant Marquis, prays father Ludovico, confessor to the unfortunate Reginald and the Marchioness, and who is also the recorder of this memoir, and who entréats that all good Christians that read this sad story will pray for the souls of the departed sinners.

CHAP. VH.

“AND is it possible that this frightful tale can be authentic,” said Henrietta, laying down the manuscript.

“Alas! I fear we must not doubt its truth,” replied Adelaide, pale with distressing recollections; “the circumstances of my father’s death have very nearly verified this singular prediction; and I think, Henrietta, that the dreadful form we both beheld in my late apartments, and some similar occurrences, but too well prove the existence of supernatural agency.”

“But the prediction has not been literally fulfilled,” observed Henrietta, “and
F 2 therefore

therefore I cannot but imagine that there must be some extreme exaggeration, or some deviation from the truth."

"What! does Mademoiselle doubt the truth of the story," cried Marcella: "Well, I have lived forty years in this family, and never once heard it doubted till now. Even the Marquis himself, who has as many doubts as any body, he believes that the story is a fact, and was so frightened once when he read it, that he would not let it remain in his library."

Henrietta, not chusing to make any further observations on the subject in the presence of Marcella, now entreated Adelaide to retire; and they were accordingly attended by the old woman into the bed-chamber, where they were soon left to seek the repose so essential to the health of Adelaide, who, however, felt more inclined to converse than sleep—a propensity which Henrietta carefully avoided indulging her in, and the remainder of the dark hours passed undisturbed.

With

With minds deeply impressed with distressing recollections of the past, and fearful anticipation of the future, the young friends enjoyed not the renovating comfort of calm repose ; and weary of their pillows, they rose at an early hour ; and the morning being uncommonly fine for the season, Adelaide mentioned the permission she had received of walking on the ramparts, and proposed to Henrietta their availing themselves of the earliness of the hour, and proceeding thither, in the hope that the morning air and varied prospect might reanimate her hitherto depressed spirits.

Henrietta eagerly acquiesced, and they immediately prepared for their walk, having directed Marcella to attend, and conduct them to the nearest door, which led out to the ramparts.

The old woman soon led them through several unfrequented passages, into a small court, which had a strong iron gate, that opened on a broad flight of stone steps, leading up to the western rampart.

Lonely and desolate as these once strong and massy walls appeared to have been, it was now but too evident that they could not repel the slightest attack ; the parapet which ran along the platform was broken, and overgrown with ivy in many places ; and a few scattered ruins only served to mark the spots where several watch turrets had once stood. The portcullis, of which they had a distant view, seemed in tolerable repair ; and the main body of the castle, also several large towers, still preserved the appearance of their original strength, although the dark grey stones of which they were formed gave a look of sombre melancholy, that filled the imagination with the recollection of days long past. The luxuriant gardens and shrubberies on the south side of the edifice, although now despoiled of their varied beauties, yet formed a striking contrast, by their marble fountains, temples, statues, and ever-green vistas, to the wildly sublime scenery, which towered in all the majesty of Alpine grandeur

grandeur around them ; while, through the opening of a defile, formed by two ranges of high rocks, could be perceived the distant spires of Grenoble, and the winding course of the Isere, which, passing beneath the castle walls, was lost in the turn of the rugged rock on which the vast fabric was erected, and again became visible, as the eye wandered towards the city of Grenoble.

“ The windows of your apartments overlook this rampart, beyond the terrace, Adelaide,” observed Henrietta, as the young friends paused to survey the scenery.

“ If it were not for the interior wall, how charmingly we might contrive, with a little assistance, to escape from this rampart, instead of——.”

Henrietta was suddenly interrupted by the voice of the Marquis, who, having silently followed them a few paces, had overheard the last words so incautiously uttered by Miss Vernor, and now, with a smile, but ill disguising his inward rage, he abruptly appeared, saying—

“The confidence I yesterday placed in Mademoiselle Henrietta led me to hope she would at least observe a prudent silence, on a subject which I perceive I was but too well justified in supposing she only would have suggested to the artless mind of my niece—I mean, that of disgracefully flying from the abode of her ancestors; but I am now proceeding on the evidence of facts. Be pleased then, Mademoiselle Vernor, to make your adieus to your friend, who cannot certainly long regret a stranger, whose heretical principles have doubtless deprived her of the happiness of being instructed in the sacredness of relative duties.”

“If the Marquis St. Viviers remembers the sacredness of relative duties with half the reverence and just observance that he enforces to others, he may have no cause for future regret, or self-condemnation,” replied Henrietta, with an air of spirited hauteur, which, together with her words, seemed

seemed to throw the Marquis into confusion.

"Explain, I insist, Mademoiselle," he cried, in a tone of angry enquiry.

"Consult your own heart, my Lord," said Miss Vernor; "from it you will receive the best and truest explanation."

"Cannot even my presence check this singular and insulting language?" exclaimed the Marquis, his countenance betraying the most violent emotions:—"is it possible that you, Adelaide, can remain and listen to these calumnious insinuations, without feeling indignation?—Mademoiselle," he continued, again turning to Henrietta, "you compel me to disregard the laws of hospitality, and I reluctantly declare, that your absence from the castle would be most desirable, and I must take immediate measures to prepare for your safe conduct to England.—I am sorry that—."

The deep sigh of Adelaide, who now
fainted

fainted in the arms of her friend, interrupted the Marquis, who, wildly catching the lifeless form of his niece from the supporting embrace of Henrietta, bore her rapidly along towards the southern rampart, and thence into the apartments of his lady, followed by Miss Vernor, of whose imputed crime the Marchioness was now hastily informed, while remedies for restoring Adelaide to animation were unsuccessfully applied; and, after a short time, she was conveyed, insensible, to her own chamber, and medical assistance procured.

The malicious anger of the Marquis, however, induced him to positively declare, that Henrietta should no more be one moment alone with her friend; nor could all her tears and entreaties obtain for her the melancholy pleasure of being permitted to accompany Adelaide to her room. In vain she mentioned the distress and despair which the lovely girl would endure, on not finding her near her—all was unavailing; and ere the Marquis quitted the saloon, to
learn

learn whether Adelaïde was recovered, he gave orders that a carriage should be got ready to convey Mademoiselle Vernor to Grenoble, recommending to her to place herself as a boarder at the Benedictine convent, till she could procure proper attendance to her own country.

While Henrietta vainly attempted, through the influence of the Marchioness, to procure the recall of an arrangement, which threatened to prove so inimical to the peace and safety of Adelaïde, the latter, slowly recovering from the swoon occasioned by the shock she had just received, was as vainly imploring the Marquis, who had recently entered her apartment, to permit the continuance of Henrietta with her; but the Marquis remained inflexible; and the day had not elapsed ere Henrietta found herself in the convent of the Benedictines at Grenoble.

To this new situation, a few hours reflection at length perfectly reconciled her, as she considered that she was now much

more at liberty to plan the escape of her friend, than she could possibly have been, had she remained in the castle.

CHAP. VIII.

THE departure of Henrietta was soon made known to Adelaide, who, thus deprived of almost every hope of again beholding her dear young companion, and filled with the keenest distress at the apparent disappointment of all her plans of escape, passed the day in weeping, peremptorily refusing to see the Marquis, or to take any refreshment; and in this state she continued till Jaques entered the anti-chamber, to take away Cæsar to be fed, the faithful

faithful animal still lingering in the apartment of his mistress.

The sound of the old man's voice, requesting that Marcella would procure her lady's permission for him to enquire personally after her health, suggested to Adelaide that he might have some communication to make to her, and she immediately arose, and, pale and faint, entered the anti-chamber.

Poor Jaques appeared extremely shocked at the alteration which grief had effected in her lovely features. He did not, however, presume to hazard any observation on that circumstance ; but, after expressing his hope that she would soon be perfectly well and happy, glanced towards something he held in his hand, with an humbly significant look, which was perfectly understood by Adelaide, who now directed Marcella to present Jaques with a glass of wine ; and, while the old woman was occupied in obeying her command, received a small billet from the porter, who,

who, while she was hastily concealing it, called Cæsar towards him, and affecting to find fault with the dog's collar, said—

“ The poor animal is quite pinched with this ugly collar—I must see and provide him with a larger one : or, if Mademoiselle will have the condescension to look at it sometimes, poor Cæsar may escape any further injury, by Mademoiselle's just unfastening the first clasp.”

The absence of Marcella permitting Jaques to speak with significance, Adelaide soon comprehended that he wished her to understand that some future billets might be enclosed in the dog's collar, a device which she had before heard was practicable ; and she immediately intimated to the old man, by a sign, that she would pay attention to his hint.

Jaques, now having received his glass of wine, and having had the pleasure of drinking to the felicity of his respected young lady, led away Cæsar, while Adelaide retired to her chamber, to peruse the billet
she

she had received, and which the superscription informed her came from the Chevalier de Valmont.

The billet contained only a few agitated lines, earnestly imploring Adelaide to inform him whether she could resolve on making an attempt to escape that very night, as circumstances of the utmost importance would compel him to leave Dauphiny ere the morning dawned.

This proposal filled the mind of Adelaide with mingled joy, perplexity, and grief.—She was rejoiced at the possibility of so soon emancipating herself from the unjust authority of her uncle ; but ignorant whether Henrietta had been conveyed, or that the Chevalier was acquainted with her absence, she hesitated how to decide : for not even the utmost terrors for her own safety could induce her to resolve on leaving the castle, while the situation of her beloved friend was unknown to her.

“ Henrietta has endured insult, and has suffered under usurped authority, to remain
near,

near, to assist and console me ; and shall I now desert her, when I am uncertain whether the detested Bionville, enraged at her unvaried rejection of his hand, may not have influenced the Marquis to this singular act, and that he has not already taken measures for forcing her into his power."

As this last suspicion struck on the alarmed mind of Adelaide, she experienced the most cruel fears that her conjecture might not be unfounded ; and the irresolution and anxiety she now suffered, almost prevented her from replying to the Chevalier's billet, which at length she did, briefly informing him of what had occurred respecting Henrietta, and that she could not leave the castle till she had attempted to learn something of the real situation of her friend.

Adelaide had scarcely finished her note, when Jaques requested to be permitted to speak to her. She went into the anti-chamber, and the old man delivered her a letter, which he said he had been ordered
by

by the Marquis to present to her. Desiring Jaques to wait, she retired to read this epistle, which she found was written by the Marquis, and contained, after a thousand protestations of grief, at having been compelled to remove Mademoiselle Vernor, the pleasing information of her being in the Benedictine convent at Grenoble.

Grateful to Heaven for this intelligence, Adelaide subjoined the direction to Henrietta, in the billet intended for the Chevalier, and added, that, if he thought he could secrete her in a place of safety till she could be joined by her friend, she would be ready to accept his aid in leaving the castle at the hour he wished.

She then wrote a few coldly polite lines to the Marquis, returning him thanks for the information he had given her; and, while putting the letter into the hands of Jaques, slipped him the billet, addressed to the Chevalier, totally unobserved by Marcella.

“Cæsar will soon be back, Mademoiselle,”
said

said Jaques, significantly, and then left the room ; while Adelaide again returned to her chamber, to reflect on the most probable means of withdrawing Henrietta from the convent, in which the Marquis had placed her.

The sorrow-wearied frame, and agitated mind of Adelaide, had, however, rendered her very unequal to the task of planning any scheme for the release of her friend ; and she had perplexed herself in vain for near an hour, when Jaques returned with Cæsar.

When the porter had withdrawn, Adelaide, to engage the attention of Marcella, ordered her to bring some refreshments ; and, while she was employed in spreading the table with various dried fruits, bread, and wine, Adelaide unfastened the collar of Cæsar, and found another billet pinned in the lining.

After replacing the collar, she withdrew into her chamber, and there read the billet. It was from the Chevalier, who now in-
formed

formed her that he had been before acquainted with the situation of Mademoiselle Vernor, and that that circumstance had determined him to hurry his departure, lest, as he had but too much reason to fear, the amiable Henrietta might be involved in some more unpleasant difficulties, should she remain many more days in Dauphiny.

The Chevalier now expressed his admiration of Adelaide's generous friendship, which would have led her to miss the only opportunity of escape, rather than desert her friend; and concluded by requesting her to meet him in the uninhabited chambers, at twelve o'clock, when he hoped to succeed in conducting her from the castle, as every thing which could facilitate her escape was now prepared.

The perusal of the above affected Adelaide with the liveliest emotions of joy and gratitude to Heaven, whose protection she now most fervently implored.

Rising from her devotions with a mind infinitely more placid and composed than
she

she had, for a considerable time, enjoyed; she quitted her chamber, to partake of the early supper Marcella had prepared ; justly conceiving, that, to abstain any longer from endeavouring to take some refreshment, would, as it must add to the weakness of her frame, be highly imprudent, especially as she probably should have much fatigue to endure.

Poor Marcella, whom Adelaide most truly regretted not being at liberty to confide in, was quite delighted to see Mademoiselle attempt to eat and swallow a little wine, and who, at her young lady's desire, partook so heartily of the repast, that she soon exhibited signs of drowsiness, which Adelaide carefully avoided dispersing ; and shortly after supper, desired the old woman to hasten to bed, saying that she herself would soon retire. She needed not a repetition of this pleasing command ; and, after having vainly offered her services to assist her young lady in undressing, withdrew into her closet, when her loud breathing

breathing soon proclaimed that she slept.

As Adelaide retired to her chamber, the castle clock struck ten. She had now two hours to collect any little articles she could conveniently take along with her, and she immediately commenced this employment, trembling the while lest Marcella should awake and surprise her.

An elegant wardrobe had been provided for her use by the Marchioness, but they consisted chiefly of mourning habits, and various ornaments of jet. These, however, Adelaide overlooked; and, having carefully selected a few essential articles, which she tied up in a small bundle, she was on the point of closing the drawers, when she perceived the small ivory box, which she had received from the hands of her lamented father, on the morning of the dreadful day which separated them in Lisbon. She had never yet opened it, though she had frequently intended doing so; and now the present hour being one so improper
for

for the examination of what might contain papers or remembrancers, which might extremely affect her, she put it into her pocket unclosed, determining, at the same time, to take the first opportunity of learning what were its contents.

The travelling hat and long cloak, which she had worn during her journey to the castle, were still in her possession ; but, fearful that they might betray her, she did not dare to use them, and was therefore compelled to fix upon a long black silk scarf and veil, as the only means of disguise in which she might escape ; as it was probable the Marchioness did not know that she had such articles of dress, they having been purchased at Rochfort. Cautiously observing that she had left no letters or papers behind her, which might lead to a discovery of the Chevalier de Valmont's acquaintance with her, Adelaide soon found that the hours glided rapidly on ; and she had scarcely finished her little arrangements, when the clock chimed the third quarter

quarter after eleven. Adelaide listened with a beating heart and trembling limbs. When the shrill vibration ceased to sound along the galleries, she put on her scarf and veil, and taking her little parcel, and a lamp, quitted her chamber, the door of which she shut, and passed into the anti-room.

Here a new and unremembered difficulty occurred; for the moment Cæsar heard her footsteps, he awoke, and, with a low whine, crawled towards her, and seemed to watch her looks.

Adelaide, in the utmost perplexity and terror, paused. Should she confine the dog in her own apartments, there was every probability that his cry would awaken Marcella, and discover all; and, if she suffered him to follow her into the deserted rooms, there existed an equal chance that he might alarm the Marchioness's women, whose apartments were so near, by growling at De Valmont; or, should she
let

let him follow her out of the castle, would infallibly betray her.

At length she was compelled to resolve on the alternative of taking the dog with her to the porter's lodge, and direct Jaques not to return with him, but to lock him up. Secretly pleased that she had now a kind of companion to attend her through those dreary rooms, Adelaide once more softly stepped along, and, followed by her faithful Cæsar, opened the door leading on the corridor. The night was awfully still and the echo of her feet vibrating around the vaulted roof of the hall, almost led her to fancy that some being retraced her steps. Fearful of raising her eyes, lest she should behold a confirmation of her fears, or encounter some ghastly unsubstantial form, she swiftly pursued her way, till she reached the door leading into the gloomy rooms where she expected to meet the Chevalier. Scarcely had she passed through the first room, when a tall figure, enwrapped in a long

long cloak, and bearing a lamp, advanced to meet her, and, by his graceful walk, and shadowy plume, she recognised the Chevalier de Valmont.

Hastily taking the parcel from her hand, and whispering a congratulation on seeing her, De Valmont entreated her to lean upon his arm ; but this she declined ; and, begging him to lead the way with all possible speed, they passed through the chambers, Adelaide still having Cæsar by her side, which, on their reaching the little door on the head of the stone staircase, the Chevalier observed, and, in a tone of regret, said that it was impossible that the dog could be permitted to accompany them, as they must pass by a gallery inhabited by some of the domestics ; consequently the slightest noise might betray them.

Poor Adelaide reluctantly assented to this truth ; and De Valmont, after a moment's hesitation, entreated her to pass through the little door, while he took the dog by the collar, and led him down several

ral steps, till he reached a small door which he opened, saying—

“ This is a small secret stone chamber where Cæsar’s cries will remain unheard and, as we pass through the gate, I will tell Jaques where I have left the poor animal and he can soon be set at liberty.”

Adelaide could not object to this measure ; but, as she beheld the door close on the dog, who now set up a dismal howl, she could not restrain her tears ; and the heaviest depression of spirits seized her.

The Chevalier assisted her to descend considerable number of steep stone steps which were terminated by a small door opening into a wide gallery, that led into the corridor of the north hall. As they silently and cautiously proceeded along the corridor, Adelaide perceived a gleam of light issue from beneath a closed door, and as she passed the room, faintly distinguished the voice of some person, whose deep tones, and solemn accents, were unfamiliar to her ear, and yet she paused ; but a sign

of

of impatience and fear from her conductor instantly reminded her of her imprudence, and she followed him with a quickened pace.

Turning down a long narrow passage, at the foot of the staircase, De Valmont carefully shaded the lamp he carried, and Adelaide tremblingly followed his example, till they reached the termination, which was an iron-plated door, that, standing half open, easily admitted them on the head of another flight of stone steps. This flight, however, was short, and led down into a vaulted stone passage, the ancient arches of which were cut in rude relief, and exhibited a thousand motley and grotesque figures, while the time-worn mosaic pavement was broken and defaced in many parts, leaving large cavities, the avoiding of which required a care and slowness that ill accorded with the impatience and fears of either the Chevalier or Adelaide.— Vainly did the latter attempt to look forward through the gloomy mist which hung

upon the damp and mouldering arches, for the termination of the passage, when its uncommon length, and rough mutilated pavement, had nearly exhausted her strength and spirits. Compelled, however, by the apprehension of discovery, to renewed exertion, Adelaide, in silence, followed her conductor for near an hour, and soon found, by the increasing steepness of the descent, that they must be proceeding far beneath the foundation of the castle.— In this conjecture she was right ; but the Chevalier still preserved a cautious silence, scarcely daring to whisper encouragement to perseverance. At length they reached the end of the passage, and entered a small quadrangular space, from which three other passages branched off. De Valmont now paused, and, raising high the lamp, carefully examined the entrances of the several passages ; and, after a momentary emotion of doubt, said—

“ Certainly that leading to the right will bring us to the gate.”—He advanced a few

steps, while Adelaide remained utterly dismayed, by the air of incertitude which overspread his features.

The Chevalier, however, was too much embarrassed, to notice her agitation. His survey of the entrances did not appear to afford him any certainty of being correct in his idea, that it would lead them to the gate, where the porter had promised to await his arrival; and he was at length compelled to entreat that Adelaide would suffer him to proceed a few paces alone, that he might endeavour to ascertain whether he was mistaken or not.

Sinking, overpowered by terror and fatigue, on a broken fragment of a stone pillar, which had supported one of the arches, she intimated, by a motion of her hand, that the Chevalier had her permission to explore some part of the way alone, and he immediately entered the right hand passage.

A chilling current of air, which blew from a small grating in the vaulted roof

above, soon restored Adelaide to animation; and, after some moments, passed in all the anxiety of suspensive fear, perceiving that De Valmont did not return, she arose, with the intention of following him when, just as she quitted the seat, she perceived a light flashing on the damp glittering walls of a passage, opposite to that which De Valmont had entered. The fear of discovery suggested to her instantly to extinguish her lamp, which she did, and then sank, retiring behind the broken pillar, while, in the next moment, she beheld a tall figure, cloathed in white, advancing up the passage, from which she had just seen the rays of light reflected. It moved hastily along, and the glare of a lamp, which it held in the left hand, displayed a set of features haggard and dark, and marked by a look which betrayed the workings of a soul fit for the perpetration of deeds of horror.

All the internal faculties of this hideous being seemed absorbed in some reflection, which

which, while it gave to the countenance all the expression of assassination and cruelty, seemed also to render the man insensible to all external objects, for he still, with hurried steps, approached, and passed into the passage leading into the castle, nor once observed the almost fainting Adelaide, whose black garments afforded her at this moment no small means of safety, by rendering her form not discernable in the gloomy darkness of the place.

Scarce had the figure disappeared in the windings of the passage it had taken, when De Valmont returned. Tremblingly Adelaide sprung to meet him, and grasping his arm, whispered him to be silent, and, if he had discovered the right passage, to hasten onwards with all speed.

The Chevalier eagerly obeyed; and, venturing to support her with his arm, hurried her down the right hand passage, till they reached a small iron grating, which De Valmont easily opened, and they entered a

grass-grown æra, without side the castle walls.

"We are now close to the great gate," he said, "and my signal will soon bring Jaques with the horses."

The Chevalier now gave a loud whistle, which was immediately answered, and, in the next moment, lights streamed through the air, and they were surrounded by the Marquis and several domestics of the castle.

A faint shriek burst from the lips of Adelaide, and she sunk lifeless on the bosom of De Valmont, who supported her with one arm, while, with the other, he drew his sword, and made a vain effort at resistance; but, wounded and overpowered by numbers, he was soon compelled to resign his lovely burthen to the Marquis, who now, in a voice of malicious exultation, commanded some of his servants to convey the Chevalier to the dungeons, while he himself carried the still inanimate form of Adelaide to her apartments in the castle.

When

When the unhappy girl opened her eyes, she found herself on a sofa in her own room, with Marcella weeping beside her, and the Marquis pacing the apartment in the utmost agitation.

The moment he perceived that she was sensible, he approached, and, in a tone of anxious tenderness, entreated her to be composed, and to pardon the act of seeming violence, which regard to her happiness and his own honour had compelled him to ; then, without waiting an answer, he demanded whether Marcella had been the confidant of her flight ?

The old woman began to protest her innocence, but was instantly silenced by her Lord, who again demanded of Adelaide who had arranged the plan of her escape ?

Averting her head with a sensation of enanguished disappointment, she assured him that Marcella had been entirely ignorant of all her intentions and wishes to fly from the castle ; and now the Marquis, after a short pause, said—

"Your English friend and De Val then, were the sole contrivers of this execrable scheme, which my care and vigilance have thus happily, even for protracted. Their futile attempts are however, effectually crushed. And Mademoiselle, you may soon learn my power over you is not so easily evaded. Yet oh, Adelaide!" he continued, in an altered and impassioned, "how gladly I resign all my legal right to your obedience—how joyfully would I make sacrifice, to be considered by you friend and protector, most tender and sincere!"

Adelaide turned from him with discomfiture, and, in her anxiety to be alone, she believed the subject might be dropped, and the Marquis would retire. Yet, ere he parted, she earnestly demanded to know what was become of the Chevalier Valmont?

"He must remain in the castle to-morrow," gravely replied the Marquis.

"when I shall resign him to the authority of his guardian, who will take the most certain steps to prevent a repetition of his intrusive and rash interference. But we will converse no further on the subject of your imprudent attempt, Mademoiselle. I shall therefore only repeat to you, that my power over you is not limited—a fact of which you must be convinced, when I inform you, that I have this day received a packet from the secret friend of your father, at Bayonne, which contains a copy of a will, leaving you, in case of my brother's sudden demise, totally dependant on my pleasure till you are of age."

Ere Adelaide could demand an explanation of this abrupt and alarming assertion, the Marquis had quitted the room, and she remained motionless with astonishment, doubt, and terror.



CHAP. IX.

THE chill of disappointment and fear so powerfully pervaded the weakened frame of Adelaide, that she continued, for some time, almost insensible to the assiduous cares of poor Marcella, who at length succeeded in prevailing upon her to retire to bed: but repose was banished by the agitation and grief which still filled her bosom; and the dawn had scarcely opened when she arose; and having prevailed upon Marcella to accompany her to the deserted rooms, proceeded to liberate the poor dog, which the Chevalier, on the preceding night, had confined in the small room at the head of the stone staircase.

The

The impatient whine of the animal, as she approached, assured Adelaide that he was still there, and, with an involuntary emotion of pleasure, she opened the door of his prison, and received his bounding tokens of joy as the grateful welcome of a friend.

When Adelaide returned to her apartment, Marcella, half crying, began to mutter, in a whimsical tone, several reproaches, at not having been entrusted with her young lady's flight.

"Mademoiselle thought me a poor foolish old woman, who valued her place more than her good-nature, and so I was not to be trusted, forsooth; but I'll warrant, that, if I had been employed in the business, there would not have happened such a disappointment. I would not have betrayed you, at least, Mademoiselle; and the next attempt you make, I hope you will not slight me again."

The words of Marcella so evidently presented a hope of assistance, in any future plan

plan of escape, that Adelaide instantly deavoured to exculpate herself from charge of want of confidence in the woman, and, with truth, attributed her serve on the subject to the promise of secrecy, which she had made to Henriette. " Besides, Marcella," continued the girl, " you once hinted to me, that it would be impossible for you to give me assistance in leaving the castle, and—"

" Well, Mademoiselle, perhaps I thought so at the time," eagerly interrupted Marcella; " but now I have better hopes; if you cannot have patience for a while, and endeavour to seem resigned to continuing in the castle, who knows something may happen to help you out. But pray, my dear young lady, let me advise you to be warned, and take care your uncle has no further cause to suspect that you have any more hopes of escape. If you cannot contrive to blind his eyes, by appearing reconciled to what he cannot help, why, then, you may be

that you will never be a moment without spies on your actions."

Averse as Adelaide felt to the very idea of dissimulation, yet she could not avoid mentally acknowledging that Marcella was right; and hoping that the end she had in view would, in some degree, excuse the concealment of her real sentiments, she resolved not to suffer the Marquis again to perceive how much she feared him, and dreaded a continuance beneath his protection. This resolution she now intimated to Marcella, who highly commended her prudent decision.

While the old woman was preparing breakfast, the troubled mind of Adelaide was occupied with a thousand anxious fears for Henrietta; but, on this subject, all was incertitude and grief; nor could she dare to hope that the Marquis would acquaint her with any thing further relative to her beloved friend, who, she now but too justly dreaded, would inevitably fall into the hands of the depraved Bionville.

Thus

Thus harrassed and tortured, by the intrusion of every unpleasing subject which could assail her memory, Adelaide had scarcely power to swallow her chocolate; and, ere the breakfast was removed, the Marchioness sent to request to see her immediately.

Adelaide most reluctantly obeyed this summons; for, as she was conscious that prudence commanded her to assume an appearance of resignation, and yet felt, that the perturbation of her mind threatened to render every attempt of the kind unsuccessful, she justly feared to meet the eyes of the Marchioness, and trembled, with disgust, at the idea of entering into the presence of her Lord. But as to avoid an interview was utterly impossible, she endeavoured to fortify her resolution, by listening to the consoling whispers of hope; and suffered the Marchioness's woman to conduct her to the apartments of her lady.

As they passed through the grand hall, the eye of Adelaide was involuntarily attracted,

tracted, by a scaffolding, erected in the interior, and she perceived a number of workmen affixing coloured lamps and wreaths of laurel to the narrow arched ribs of the vaulted roof, and entwining them around the massy clustered pillars beneath. From this scene she turned in silent aversion, but at every step she encountered some mark of mirthful preparation, and gladly quickened her pace, to avoid the eager gaze of curiosity and admiration, which her appearance evidently excited in the strangers she met.

The Marchioness was alone, and received her with a degree of serious kindness which affected her.

“I have sent for you, my dear Adelaide,” said the good lady, “that I may, from your own lips, receive an explanation of the motives which have induced you to form such ill opinions of your uncle—opinions which, I am grieved to find, have hurried you to an attempt equally singular and degrading—I mean that of secretly quitting
the

the castle. I have in vain asked an elucidation of this strange affair from the Marquis. He has refused, to my earnest entreaties, even the slightest explanation.—Alas! he is totally altered in his conduct towards me, and I am anxious to learn whether I must attribute to your conduct a change of affection and manners, which at my age, must certainly prove so fatal to my health. His asperity, this morning, has given me a shock, which I fear I shall never recover.”

The pale and haggard looks of the poor Marchioness so truly confirmed her words that Adelaide, shocked, alarmed, and grieved, could not suppress her tears, and yielding to the sorrow which seized her heart, wept bitterly.

The Marchioness tenderly took her hand.—“You possess a feeling and affectionate heart, my dear child,” she said.—“This is a precious gift, when united with prudence and humility; but a tincture of vanity or self-confidence renders it a dangerous

gerous and delusive inmate of the bosom. Beware of credulity, Adelaide. It is a dreadful thing to be undeceived too late. May such a fate never be your's!"—The Marchioness heaved a deep sigh ere she continued.—" You cannot be ignorant to what I allude ; concealment, you must perceive, is therefore unnecessary ; and you will not, I trust, hesitate to disclose to me the cause of your singular conduct, since your entrance into the castle."

While the Marchioness thus addressed Adelaide, the latter reflected, that should she, without delay, disclose the secrets of her heart, she might probably add to the distress of her aunt, by furnishing such traits of the Marquis's character, as there was a probability were yet unknown to that lady ; and therefore quickly resolving not to increase any disagreement, which might have occurred between the Marchioness and her Lord, she attributed her wish of leaving the castle solely to the desire the

Marquis

Marquis had evinced, of breaking off her nuptials with the Count St. Croix.

"This reserve is unnatural to your disposition, Adelaide," said the Marchioness; "but I can appreciate the generous consideration for my peace, which urges you to be thus cautious.—Alas! I already know too much.—But no more of this: at a future time, you shall know all, and our confidence may then be mutual. And now, my dear child, it is essential that you should be informed that the Chevalier de Valmont, the friend who has hazarded so much to effect your flight, is at this moment a prisoner, and to you alone can he owe his liberation. Will you consent to bind yourself, by a solemn vow, not to accept his future offers of assistance? or, will you, by refusing to agree to this, suffer him to pine in the darkness of a dungeon?"

Adelaide, who never selfishly put her own happiness in competition with the
peace

peace of any other being, unhesitatingly assented to give the required promise.

“ Noble-minded girl !” exclaimed her aunt, “ your disinterested generosity will not remain unrewarded.”

She then rung the bell, which hung near her, and, on the entrance of a servant, desired that the Marquis might be informed that she wished to see him.

This command was delivered so suddenly, that Adelaide had no opportunity of intreating that she might not be compelled to see her uncle ; and, ere she could recover from the uneasiness which the idea of his presence occasioned her, he entered the room.

He bowed silently to Adelaide, and then cast a look of enquiry on his lady, who now, in a manner agitated and humiliated, informed him that his niece would assent to give any promise which could relieve the young Chevalier from the unpleasant embarrassment into which his concern for her had involved him.

The

The countenance of the Marquis strongly displayed the pleasure he felt on this information; and, without appearing to notice the *distract* and confused demeanour of the Marchioness, he fixed his eyes on Adelaide, with a look expressive of the utmost satisfaction, and, after highly commending her prudent and easy acquiescence with his wishes, said—

“ The Chevalier de Valmont, Mademoiselle, is so entirely dependant on my good friend Bionville, that indeed there would be a degree of cruelty in suffering him to engage in wild and unavailing schemes, which must ever end in disappointment. Of this, however, there is no further apprehension to be entertained, since I am convinced that the sacred promise of Mademoiselle St. Viviers will remain unbroken. And now, my dear niece,” he continued, attempting to take the hand of Adelaide, which she hastily drew back, “allow me to assure you, that your residence here shall not want the aid of any amusement

ment or gratification which I can procure, to render the castle more agreeable to you. Henceforth, you must no longer confine yourself to the solitary apartments which you occupy; the Marchioness, ever anxious that you should be near her, declines her usual secluded manner of passing her days, and will join me in my efforts to express how much we wish to obtain your affection and friendship."

The involuntary sighs which burst from the lips of the Marchioness, while her Lord, with all the insinuating graces of his manner, addressed Adelaide, convinced the latter that her unfortunate aunt did not make an unreluctant sacrifice of the habits of her life; and the amiable girl immediately entreated that no alteration in the family customs might take place on her account, but was soon interrupted by the Marchioness, who, in a tone of deep sorrow, said—

"I understand the delicacy of your fears, Adelaide; but be assured, that there is nothing in this arrangement that can now
affect

affect me ; and when I declare that your society presents to me the only prospect of consolation, I hope you will believe me that I resign my former habits with unconcern."

The tear, that trembled in the eye of the unhappy Marchioness, belied her words ; and Adelaide was once more on the point of requesting that she might not be the unfortunate cause of disturbing the long-established arrangements of her aunt, when she was prevented by the Marquis, who, with a glance of serious displeasure at his lady, said—

"Madame la Marquise has adopted a most singular style of expressing the satisfaction she must doubtless feel in the idea of our receiving those tender and duteous attentions from a beloved niece, whose amiable disposition, when divested of unjust prejudices, will certainly influence her to the most grateful and endearing tokens of regard."

The entrance of a servant, who came to
inform

inform the Marquis that the Chevalier Bionville had just arrived, and was impatient to see him, prevented him from proceeding in his half-reproachful animadversions on his lady; and, after requesting that Adelaide would pardon the little fracas she had witnessed, he withdrew.

When his receding steps no longer sounded on the marble pavement of the hall, the Marchioness, raising her head from the arm of a couch, over which she had leaned to conceal her emotion, said—

“ You see before you, Adelaide, a poor heart-broken old woman, whose vanity and credulous self-opinion are sufficiently punished : I must submit to my lot; but the discovery I have made, however it may wound my soul, shall not deprive me of the only means which I now possess, of recovering from the dream in which I have too long been. But this is not a moment for explanation. All I shall now say is, that I request you will pass every possible moment with me. Do not look so shocked and

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grieved, my dear child ; I am not so powerless, as to be unable to guard you from danger."

" Ah, Madame !" exclaimed Adelaide, her former horrid surmises all revived, " what are these terrific dangers that threaten me ? "

The Marchioness did not immediately reply :—She regarded Adelaide, for a moment, with a scrutinizing look, but at length rather hesitatingly said—

" Are you then ignorant that the Marquis intends to force you to give your hand to the old Count le Ligny, and that all these preparations for receiving a little world of company are but the commencement of this scheme ? But do not be afflicted. I have still influence to prevent this disaster from taking place."

Adelaide, although astonished at this unexpected information, experienced a considerable degree of relief, in being freed from the horrible suspicion, which the Marchioness's ambiguous mode of expression

sion had awakened in her bosom ; and feeling confident that no earthly power could ever compel her to forfeit her repeated vows of unchanging fidelity to her Henry, she thanked her aunt for the kind intentions to serve her, which that lady had manifested ; and then turned the discourse, by entreating that she might be either permitted to visit Miss Vernor, at Grenoble, or to write to her.

The Marchioness promised to mention her wishes to the Marquis, and then begged her niece to go and dress for dinner, reminding her that she should expect her speedy return.

CHAP. X.

WHEN Adelaide returned to her own apartment, she found her mind so much occupied by the singular conversation, which had so recently occurred, in her interview with the Marquis and Marchioness, that she felt but little inclined to attend to the necessary alteration in her dress; but although she could not form any decisive opinion of what she had heard and witnessed, yet she felt a faint glow of satisfaction warm her bosom, as she reflected that the society of the Marchioness would at least be a security to her from many disagreeable consequences of the Marquis's authority;

authority ; and firmly trusting that Heaven would preserve her in every hour of trial, she rejoiced that she had possessed resolution to free De Valmont from any obligation of giving her further assistance in the plans she might form for leaving the castle ; and began to indulge the hope, that Henrietta would be able to reach England in safety, as her lover would now be perfectly at liberty to arrange the means of her being conducted thither.

Animated by this consoling idea, Adelaide descended to dinner, and found a small party of strangers assembled in the apartments of the Marchioness. Among the company, she quickly perceived the Chevalier Bionville, who, approaching her with an air of good humour, rallied her on being without her guardian Cæsar, and appeared, by his manner, to be entirely ignorant of, or at least extremely indifferent, respecting her recent attempt at escape, and the conduct of De Valmont, who, during dinner, she learned had a few

hours before quitted the castle, and was now on his journey to Rochelle, where his regiment was said to be on the point of embarking for America.

This information, which was casually mentioned by one of the company, deeply affected Adelaide, as it rendered her doubly anxious and uneasy, as to the situation of Henrietta. But as no opportunity offered of speaking in private to the Marchioness that evening, she was compelled to endure the suspensive sorrow and agitation which tortured her mind in silence; nor could all the efforts of several very agreeable people, who composed the party, particularly engage her attention, or dissipate her grief. One lady, however, called Madame de Beauvais, a relation to the Marchioness, attracted, for a few moments, the notice of Adelaide. The tones of her voice were affecting; and there seemed a sensibility in her looks and manners, which appeared singular, as she was a woman of high fashion, and remarkable for the splendour of her

her establishment, in Paris; the amusements and dissipations of which, she nevertheless spoke of in a tone of disgust and dislike.

Madame de Beauvais did not particularly address her observations to Adelaide, but she looked as if she wished that Mademoiselle St. Viviers should notice and approve them; and indeed, had not the amiable girl found her mind pre-occupied, by concern for her beloved friend, Madame would most certainly have succeeded in obtaining both her attention and esteem.

The company did not separate till late; but before they retired to their respective chambers, a series of amusements were arranged for the week following; and it was agreed, that the intermediate time should be employed in preparing themselves for the masked ball, which was fixed for the first day of the week.

Glad to escape from the gay inmates of the castle, Adelaide once more found herself in her own apartments, where Marcella

most anxiously awaited her appearance ; and almost immediately on her entrance, informed her that Jaques had been there in the evening, and had taken away Cæsar ; and that he had desired her to inform her lady that the dog would be back as soon as she returned to her room.

Marcella had scarcely finished speaking, when Cæsar sprung into the anti-chamber, and testified, by a thousand little tokens of joy, his delight at again beholding Adelaïde, who, while the animal fawned at her feet, observed that his collar was rather widened, and instantly conceiving that some letter or billet was concealed in the collar, she directed Marcella to take lights into her chamber ; and the moment the old woman had withdrawn, she discovered that her surmise was just, as she found, in the dog's collar, a letter from De Valmont, inclosing one from Henrietta.

The epistle of the Chevalier was short ; and the almost unintelligible hand-writing, together with the hurried style, evinced
how

how distracted was his mind: after regretting the recent disappointment she had experienced, in her attempted escape, and at her having promised not to accept of his future services, he confirmed the unpleasing intelligence, that he was compelled to hasten to Rochelle, to embark with his regiment; and, after lamenting, in expressions of unfeigned distress, the impossibility of attending even Mademoiselle Vernor to England; he proceeded to inform Adelaide, that necessity had impelled him to entrust the safe conduct of the amiable Henrietta to the care of his servant, an elderly man of respectability, whose fidelity and integrity had long obtained for him the confidence and esteem of his master, and who had actually succeeded, on the preceding day, in withdrawing Mademoiselle Vernor from the Benedictine convent.

“I am now in the presence of your beloved friend, Mademoiselle,” continued De Valmont; “she is concealed in the house of an acquaintance, on whom I can

rely, in the Perreere, in Grenoble. The dreaded moment of my separation from Henrietta arrives, and the moments which I have stolen to bid her adieu, fly rapidly. Her tears—but need I say what her affliction causes me to suffer? She weeps, as she hastily pens the lines of farewell, which I have undertaken to forward to you. Happily Jaques is not suspected as the assistant of your attempted flight. By his means I may therefore hope that you will receive these letters. Dare I say, that in happier times we may meet again. Alas!—But pardon me—Henrietta speaks—I hear, for the last hour, her enchanting voice.—Adieu, Mademoiselle; to-morrow I will send you an account of our success.”

Adelaide closed the letter of De Valmont, and, with trembling hand, took up that of Henrietta.

“The pleasure which my dearest Adelaide would feel, in hearing from her Henrietta, will

will be entirely checked, by the information, that when these lines meet her tearful eye, the friend to whom she is most dear will be some miles on her journey to her native land. I will not say how much misery the unavoidable necessity of leaving France occasions me to feel. Adelaide cannot doubt the sincerity of my friendship ; professions of regret are therefore idle ; and when I inform her that I have already, at the hazard of my life, escaped falling into the snares of the abandoned Bionville, she will be convinced that nothing but the certainty that my own ruin must be the result of continuing longer in Dauphiny, and the conviction that my remaining cannot, in any one instance, serve the friend of my heart, could alone compel me to seek for safety in absence. But do not imagine, Adelaide, that distance can effect or lessen my anxious fears for you.--- Oh no ! When safe in England, I may find agents whom I can employ to watch over your safety ; and be assured, that you shall

not long remain ignorant of the fate of Don Alvarez de Suza. I have a thousand things to say to you—a thousand cautions to give—but my time is limited; and my trembling fingers can scarcely scrawl the few lines I send.—De Valmont remains in Grenoble but till he sees me set off.—In a few minutes, all will be ready for my departure.—Oh, Adelaide! I am summoned to the carriage.—Adieu, dearest, best beloved of friends.—I have obtained a moment's delay. The Chevalier informs me, that your future time, while you remain in the castle, will be spent in the society of the Marchioness. This intelligence has given me some consolation: her heart and principles are excellent; and I will trust, that while you are under her immediate protection, you will be safe.—Ah! I am again called. Once more, farewell.—You will ever be present to my heart—Think of me, dearest Adelaide, and believe that your safety and happiness must ever form the sincerest wishes of my soul. Adieu—adieu; may

the Power, who alone can save us from all evil, watch over and protect you.—Farewell.

HENRIETTA VERNOR.”

Adelaide read this epistle with feelings of mingled pleasure and grief; that her beloved friend might soon be free from the dangers which she seemed to dread, was a consideration which afforded her the liveliest satisfaction; yet the idea that she might never again behold her, caused the tears of tender regret to bathe her cheek. But this selfish sorrow could not long reside in the generous bosom of Adelaide, and rejoicing that Henrietta was no longer subject to the disagreeable circumstances in which she herself was involved, she listened to the soothing whispers of hope; and devoutly praying that her friend might reach her native land in safety, she indulged the delightful anticipation, that they should meet in happier times.

For

For some time, the mind of Adelaide was so fully occupied with the situation of Henrietta, that she had almost forgotten her own particular concerns, till at length the recollection of the party with whom she had passed the evening recurred ; and she remembered, with pleasure, that she had heard Bionville mention that he should pass the night in the castle, and this circumstance appeared favourable to the flight of Henrietta.

The thoughts of Adelaide next reverted to Madame de Beauvais, whose undisguised wish of attracting her notice had not escaped her observation. This lady had appeared particularly amiable ; she was also the Marchioness's relation ; and although not young, she was very handsome, and had an air of the world, which gave both dignity and ease to her figure. But what more particularly had engaged the attention of Adelaide to this lady, was her having several times spoke of a chateau she possessed on the banks of the river Adour, in Gascony,

cony, and her having repeatedly entreated the Marquis and Marchioness to accompany her thither, including Adelaide in her invitation—an invitation which the Marchioness had declined accepting, although evidently against the wishes of her Lord, who had spoken of Madame de Beauvais's estate being so near Bayonne, as a circumstance particularly favourable to his visiting the chateau de Arrancy, so lately occupied by his brother, and which now belonged to Adelaide, to whom, he said, the idea of visiting the scenes of her early youth must be peculiarly interesting. This was indeed partly true; but, alas! the scenes to which the Marquis desired to conduct the lovely girl could no longer present to her view aught but images which must recal a thousand tender recollections, that would doubly embitter her present state.

Adelaide had listened to this proposed excursion in trembling fear, yet she had heard the Marchioness reject the invitation, with an emotion of sorrowful regret; and

now,

now, although she dreaded to encounter the view of objects which must awaken in her mind the deepest grief, she yet sighed to bury her grief in the loved sequestered shades, rendered so dear to her heart by the now sad remembrance of past happiness. But the age of her aunt, and the consciousness that she could not undertake such a journey, without exposing herself to more fatigue than her infirmities would permit her to bear, induced Adelaide not to express the least anxiety on the subject, lest the Marchioness should, in regard to her, yield an assent which might lead to a fatal termination. The Marquis's evident wish to visit the chateau of Madame de Beauvais, however, soon gave some satisfaction to Adelaide, as she could not but consider it as a slight proof that he did not intend to confine her to the castle. His design of uniting her to the nobleman spoken of by the Marchioness, would not have given her any particular uneasiness, as she well knew that her engagements with
the

the Count St. Croix were too sacred to be easily or lightly broken, even by the power of her uncle; but when the recollection occurred, of his having recently boasted the existence of a will, giving him an entire command over her actions, till she became of age, she could not avoid shrinking in dismay from the prospect of sorrow and persecution, with which such an extraordinary and unexpected power seemed to threaten her. That her father had transacted some business of a private and mysterious nature with some, to her unknown, person at Bayonne, Adelaide well knew; yet she could not conceive that her lamented parent would have made a secret of his intentions of consigning her to the care of the Marquis, had he really done so; besides, her near approaching union with St. Croix seemed to render such a step unnecessary; at least, it appeared extremely singular, that the Marquis alone should have been named as her guardian.

The more Adelaide reflected on this subject,

ject, the more she felt herself at a loss how to account for so extraordinary a circumstance ; and she could not avoid harbouring a strong suspicion that she was the dupe of dark and artful treachery. But her utter ignorance of the name and abode of the person whom she had seen with her father, and the impossibility of making any enquiries after him, at such a distance, and under her present circumstances, precluded every hope of unravelling the cruel plot, of which she seemed to be the victim ; and now she most ardently regretted that the ill health and advanced years of the Marchioness would prove such invincible obstacles to her taking a journey into Gascony.

Perplexed and harrassed, by unavailing reflections and anxiety, Adelaide was retiring to bed, when she suddenly recollected the small ivory box, which she had put into her pocket on the night of her unsuccessful attempt to escape ; and now eagerly grasping at this slight reed of hope, she
instantly

instantly took out the box, and, with trembling haste, endeavoured to open it.

Nearly a quarter of an hour elapsed ere she could discover the secret spring by which it was fastened ; but at length, when almost despairing of success, she fortunately found the proper method ; for, on pressing one side, the lid started up, and presented to her view several small packets of letters, and a case containing a miniature portrait of a lady, whose handsome but haughty features were unknown to her.—The picture Adelaide soon laid aside, and proceeded to examine the packets of letters ; but, to her infinite disappointment and surprise, she found they were labelled with slips of paper, in the hand-writing of her father, directing each packet to be delivered unopened into the hands of the Marquis St. Viviers.

For some moments, Adelaide gazed on the letters, with an involuntary wish of disregarding the prohibition which the labels implied ; but soon the sense of rectitude returned,

returned, and dyed her cheeks with blushes, for having, even in thought, transgressed that sacred adherence to justice and truth which virtuous minds so seldom lose.

Returning the contents into the box, she closed it with infinitely more eagerness than she had opened it, and, in the fervor of her devotion, sought the calm consciousness of that rectitude which she had nearly forfeited, by indulging a blameable and unworthy curiosity.

CHAP. XI.

EARLY on the succeeding day, the Marchioness sent to request the company of her niece alone, prior to the assembling of the dinner party, who, in conformity to the usual life of the lady of the mansion, breakfasted in their own apartments, and amused themselves till the hour of dining. Adelaide found the Marchioness in her dressing-room: she looked pale, and unhappy; and the uneasiness of her mind seemed to have added several years to her appearance. She sighed deeply, as she held out her hand to her niece; and after lamenting, in rather a querulous manner, that she was
thus

thus compelled to deviate from her time-endear'd habits, she informed Adelaide that as she found it impossible to go through the toil of entertaining her visitors, her cousin, Madame de Beauvais, had considerably offered to occasionally fill her place, provided Mademoiselle St. Viviers would emerge from her seclusion, and assist in the friendly task. The Marchioness then became lavish in the praise of Madame de Beauvais, and requested her niece to cultivate the friendship of that lady. This command was far from displeasing to Adelaide, for Madame had appeared to her in a favourable point of view; and although she would have preferred solitude to society, yet, as she could not avoid perceiving that seclusion would entirely prevent every opportunity of defeating whatever plans the Marquis might have in meditation, she resolved to combat her aversion to the gay scenes of folly into which she must enter, and assent to the wishes of the Marchioness and Madame de Beauvais.—

Having

Having therefore signified her acquiescence in the arrangements of her aunt, Adelaide now received a thousand thanks and caresses, which were interrupted by the entrance of the Marquis and Madame de Beauvais.

The Marchioness immediately spoke to Madame de Beauvais on the subject of Adelaide's compliance ; and that lady, with the most winning sweetness of manner, immediately complimented the amiable girl, and expressed, in the warmest terms, the extreme happiness she should experience, in having such "a charming associate."—The looks and expressions of Madame de Beauvais were apparently ingenuous and unaffected ; yet Adelaide had felt more satisfaction, on obtaining one approving glance from the generous sincerity of Henrietta's eye, than she experienced from all the animated encomiums of this lady. However, she made an effort to check the sigh of regret ; and while the tear of remembrance trembled on her dark eye-lash, she returned the compliments of
Madame

Madame de Beauvais, who now found a new theme in the gentle sensibility of her amiable young friend.

A summons to the dining parlour put a period to all further compliments; and the Marquis, who, from the first moment of his entrance, had been conversing from one of the windows with Bionville, who was walking beneath in the garden, now flew to assist his lady, who received his attentions with a complacency which proved to Adelaide that he had succeeded in making his peace with her aunt, who soon joined in his apologies for want of gallantry to the other ladies.

The party of this day, Adelaide found, had received an addition, in the person of the Marquis's confessor, a friar of a neighbouring convent. This man appeared the very image of austerity; his figure was tall, and remarkably thin; his complexion a death-hue white, his eyes large, and light-coloured, but uncommonly heavy, and, with a look so truly expressive of, gloomy melancholy,

melancholy, that they rendered his slow glance repulsive to the most innocent indication of mirth or joy; yet, on his mouth, which was not ugly, there sometimes lurked a faint and transient, yet placid smile, which spoke to the eye of discrimination the token of long extinguished passions. His voice was shrill, yet hollow; and his action, though not peculiarly ungraceful, had in it something peculiarly wild and singular. During the time that the friar remained in the company, and he did not depart till towards the vesper hour, his whole attention seemed fixed on Adelaide, who, on her part, felt as irresistibly impelled to notice him; yet he spoke not to her; and the few words which he did utter were addressed only to the Marquis.

His departure seemed the signal for the commencement of hilarity; and, after rallying the Marquis, on the choice of his director, Madame de Beauvais led the way to the western hall, with the intention of

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shewing the company the several alterations it had undergone, to render it suitable to the entertainments which the Marquis meant to give.

This immense hall, which occupied the length of one entire wing of the castle, was remarkably lofty; and the arched roof was supported by two ranges of large Gothic pillars, of black marble, which ran along each side near the walls, and terminated in clustered ribs, forming the arch above. On one side, a considerable number of small narrow windows admitted a partial portion of light, and, on the other, were recesses answering to the windows, occupied by Venetian mirrors; beneath were small sofas, covered with richly-embroidered crimson satin, edged with gold fringe, correspondent with the window-curtains, and the drapery which was suspended from above a gallery, fitted up as an orchestra, at the lower end of the room. At the upper, a large and wide fire-place displayed the blazing light of the sparkling firs and

heavy billets of wood, which diffused a warm glow through some part of the room, but which, notwithstanding the aid of gilded decorations, appeared much more like the aisle of a cathedral, than an apartment devoted to mirth and melody: however, the Marquis averred, that when the chandeliers and lustres were illumined, and the pillars hung with wreaths of flowers, the appearance would be very different.

His guests were of course too polite and fashionable, not to allow all this, and gave it as their opinion, that nothing could be more novel or magnificent.

Among those who affected the greatest degree of approbation, a young lady, called Mademoiselle de Brienne, was most conspicuous. She was a finished coquette, tolerably handsome, a neat figure, a good dancer, and possessed an excellent voice. Eager to display her scientific knowledge, she lightly touched the chords of a harp, which had just been brought from Paris, and her exclamations of rapture, as to its
tone,

tone, drew from the gay circle repeated entreaties that she would favour them with a specimen of the taste and execution each was certain she possessed.

Mademoiselle de Brienne at length consented, and gave a beautiful *rondeau* with infinite vivacity and expression.

Elated by the just praise her performance certainly merited, she turned towards Adelaide with a careless and affected air, and enquired whether she had ever attempted the harp?

A faint smile of pity, for the ridiculous conceit which Mademoiselle de Brienne displayed, transiently passed over the beautiful features of Adelaide, as she replied—

“ My mother’s extreme partiality for the harp induced me early to make that instrument my study.”

“ Oh then you are a proficient, I suppose. Well, now, that is singular, so few females are at present acquainted with the harp,” said Mademoiselle de Brienne rising and moving away; but Madame de Beauvai

Beauvais, and several of the gentlemen, aware that, she dreaded being eclipsed, began to importune Adelaide to indulge them, by taking the seat of Mademoiselle de Brienne; and the lovely girl, although by nature timid and retiring, did not yield to the affectation of repeated denials, but instantly sat down, and struck a prelude, so sublime and affecting, that her hearers were entranced with wonder and delight. But when her clear and melodious voice was heard, on her commencing an Italian air, none scarcely dared to breathe, lest they should lose the almost divine harmony; nor were their eyes less fascinated by the unequalled grace and loveliness of her figure and attitude.

Intent only on her employment, Adelaide observed not the fixed admiration which she excited, till on ceasing she raised her eyes, and discovered, in the looks of all around, except Mademoiselle de Brienne, the excess of delight and astonishment they had experienced. Confused, and shrink-

ing from the loud encomiums which were rapturously bestowed on her exquisite talents, she arose, and would gladly have availed herself of any opportunity to withdraw; but she was soon compelled to resume her seat, and repeat the air which had so much enchanted her auditors, who most reluctantly, at the express desire of the Marquis, desisted from importuning her further.

Trifling as was this incident, it procured for Adelaide an irreconcilable enemy in the mortified and vain Mademoiselle de Brienne, who endeavoured, by a display of the most blameable levity and coquetry with the Marquis, to conceal the hatred and envy which she had conceived for the amiable girl, whose mind was so superior to the degrading meanness of rivalry, that had not Mademoiselle de Brienne questioned her relative to her knowledge of the instrument, she would not have avowed that she was in the least degree mistress of it.

Madame de Beauvais, who possessed considerable penetration, had soon perceived the
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the unaffected delicacy and timidity of Adelaide; the praises she uttered were therefore delivered with an air of friendship, and without enthusiasm; of course her's were the most acceptable.

The increasing shades of evening caused the whole party to retire to the Marchioness's saloon, where cards and a late supper concluded the evening.

CHAP. XII.

WITH spirits wearied and depressed Adelaide returned to her own apartment and found all her cares and anxieties renewed with tenfold force. Incapable of reflection, amid the flattering throng which filled the castle, her confused and perplexed thoughts returned in solitude to every object which could afflict and torment her. The lateness of the hour precluded all hope of seeing Jaques, and she had examined the collar of Cæsar, without finding the least slip of paper. Marcella, however, was as loquacious as usual, and did not fail to inform her young lady, that the

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porter had not been near her apartments that evening.

This information awakened new fears in the bosom of Adelaide; she had already been extremely astonished at Jaques's not having been suspected of aiding her late intended flight, and most anxiously desired an opportunity of speaking to him on the subject, and now she dreaded that he had been discovered and dismissed. Deeply grieved at the idea of having lost the only being in the castle who seemed worthy of confidence, she retired in silence to her chamber, and passed several hours of the night in imploring the protection of Heaven, and then, with a calmed and resigned mind, sought to lose the remembrance of her sorrows in repose. She had but just arisen in the morning, when, to her extreme joy, Marcella informed her that Jaques was waiting permission to see her in the anti-room.

Directing Marcella to arrange her chamber, Adelaide instantly hastened to Jaques,

from whom, in reply to her questions; she soon learned that she need not indulge the least apprehension of his being suspected by the Marquis, of having had any share in planning her escape, as his Lord by no means considered him as an enemy.

“ Were he to suspect that I know him, Mademoiselle,” said the old man, “ I should never have an opportunity of serving you, or any individual in his power; but happily I keep him ignorant of that, and he little thinks that poor old superannuated Jaques has a thought beyond his own fire-side, and his dog.”

Adelaide expressed the pleasure she felt on this information; and Jaques then told her that his grandson, a young man much attached to the Chevalier de Valmont, was the secret bearer of the letters from Grenoble, whither he was again gone, to learn whether the young Chevalier had yet departed, or to receive any letters he might wish to send.

“ And also to enquire if there is any packet for me at the post-house,” added Jaques,

Jaques, "as the Count St. Croix promised he would entrust me with private letters for you, Mademoiselle, as soon as he supposed his friend the Chevalier was gone."

Adelaide had no time to reply to this intelligence, or to direct Jaques to caution his grandson to be minute in his enquiries at the post-house, the entrance of Marcella preventing all further discourse, except what related to Cæsar, whom Jaques now led away.

The old man had not long quitted the room, when, to the great surprise of Adelaide, Madame de Beauvais entered, with all the easy familiarity of long acquaintance.

"I am come," said she, while a most insinuating smile decked her features, "to entreat that my charming young friend will accompany me to the breakfast-parlour; we intend to pass the morning in exploring this immense and gloomy fabric, and I shall never have courage equal to such a task, unless your example can inspire me."

Adelaide, faintly smiling, testified her readiness to be one of the party, and then offered to attend Madame to the breakfast-room. As they passed along the corridor, Cæsar, who had followed his young mistress from her apartment, and who had been unperceived by Madame de Beauvais, now brushed past that lady with an angry growl, and stopped at the door of the uninhabited apartments, whining for Adelaide to open the door.

With an exclamation of fear and surprise, Madame de Beauvais enquired to whom the frightful animal belonged; but on learning that he had attached himself to Adelaide, and had followed them from the anti-room of her apartments, the lady's expressions of wonder redoubled, and she threw her young companion into much embarrassment and perplexity, by repeatedly enquiring where she had first seen the dog, who continued whining and scraping at the door of the deserted apartments, into which Madame declared she would not venture

venture, without company, for the world.

Scarcely, however, had these words escaped her, when she caught a glimpse of the Chevalier Bionville, crossing the hall beneath, and instantly called to him to join Adelaide and herself in the corridor; at the same time declaring, with a versatility of determination which surprised her lovely young companion, that she would now, protected by the Chevalier, instantly explore the uninhabited chambers.

The moment Bionville reached the corridor, she requested him to open the door of this suite. He looked surprised, hesitated, and at length attempted to rally her out of her design; but Madame de Beauvais was now obstinately resolved to enter, and the Chevalier, gravely acquiescing in her wishes, opened the door, and led the way into the apartments. There was nothing, however, in the whole suite which could engage the attention of Madame de Beauvais, but the multiplicity of old romances

manes in the book-case ; and, after passing a few minutes in laughing at these, she approached the door of communication with the apartments first occupied by Adelaide, on her arrival at the castle.

The door was not fastened, and they found an easy admittance. The splendid, although ancient style of the furniture in these rooms, seemed to create some surprise in the mind of Madame de Beauvais, as to the Marquis's suffering them to be shut up ; and, on her expressing her opinion on the subject, Adelaide informed her that she had slept in them, and then related the circumstance of her having been so much alarmed by the terrific object which, after midnight, had appeared in her chamber. As the story of Durancy's being assassinated in the castle during the lifetime of the Marquis's father was no secret, Madame de Beauvais instantly declared her supposition that Adelaide had undoubtedly beheld the troubled shade of the murdered Chevalier, a declaration which called forth
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all the keen irony of Bionville, who, however, amidst this affected raillery, could not help betraying some tokens of chagrin and displeasure ; and now advised their immediately quitting a gloomy suite of rooms, which could only impress their minds with the most extravagant and ridiculous ideas.

Madame de Beauvais, piqued at the evident contempt manifested by Bionville, declared that she had not half satisfied her curiosity, and then began praising the beauty of the skilfully-wrought tapestry, which was some of the best work of the Gobelins; and Adelaide, having pointed out to her the exact spot where the figure had vanished, she said—

“ Pray, Chevalier, should you have courage to sleep one night in the castle, if you had had just such a visitant as Mademoiselle describes ? ”—The Chevalier turned away.—“ Well, I protest,” added Madame, “ that representation of Hubert of Dauphiny is so exquisitely done, that I
could

could almost fancy I in reality behold the fond father, in all his first emotions of agonizing astonishment, grief, and despair, and that——”

At this moment Cæsar, who had followed the party into the rooms, set up a loud and frightful howl, and began tearing, with extreme violence, a part of the tapestry, in a distant corner of the room.

Madame de Beauvais, who suffered a most unfeigned fear of and dislike to dogs, now gave a faint scream, and ran away out of the room as fast as she could, just as Cæsar dragged from beneath the tapestry the coarse habit of a white friar, torn and stained in many parts with blood, and laid it at the feet of Adelaide, who, sinking on a couch, with a horror-fixed glance, perceived a dagger, and a small miniature picture, fall from the folds of the garment, as the dog pulled it along.

Quick as lightning the Chevalier caught up the portrait, muttering, in a hurried voice—

“Confusion

“ Confusion on the idiot’s carelessness.”

He attempted to conceal its golden chain within the hollow of his hand, but the eyes of Adelaide had already distinguished it, and, with a shriek of frantic despair, she sprung up, and made an effort to snatch it from the hand of the Chevalier, who, not aware of the suddenness of her action, suffered the picture to fall. One look was sufficient for the miserable Adelaide; it was a portrait of herself.—Feebly she uttered—

“ Oh, my murdered Henry! in death only could you have lost the earliest pledge of my affection.”

She fell senseless on the floor, just as the Marquis rushed into the apartment.

Too soon was she revived to a sense of her irremediable misfortune. Her eyes fell on the Marquis; she was still in the deserted apartments, with himself and Bionville.

“ Murderers, unhand me—begone!” she
wildly

wildly shrieked, and shrinking from their assisting support.

“ You are mistaken, Adelaide ; on my life you are,” cried the Marquis, in a voice scarcely articulate.—“ What dreadful delusion of your mind can have led you to utter these dreadful words.—Ah ! surely your senses are deranged.”

“ I am not mad.—Alas ! I am but in too perfect possession of my intellects. Have I not beheld the picture, which, in the dawn of youth, I hung around my Henry’s neck ; and were not that monastic guise and bloody dagger the too certain evidences that my beloved has been assassinated ? “ Away ! away ! ” she wildly added ; “ nor pollute me with thy murderous hands.”

She arose, and was flying from the rooms, when the Marquis, forcibly grasping her hand, and heedless of her cry of horror, would have detained her, had not the dog sprung upon him, and forced him to release her.

The

The Marquis, assisted by Bionville, released himself from the angry animal, which let go his hold when Adelaide was free, and ran crouching to the feet of his mistress, who had again; exhausted by her feelings, sunk on the sofa.

The Marquis, after swearing maliciously at the dog, once more addressed Adelaide, saying—

“ For your own sake, Mademoiselle, remain and listen to my explanation. The monkish habit which you have seen, belonged to one of the assassins who murdered Durancy :—the dagger was also his—they must have lain in these apartments for years. As to the picture, which has evidently led you to adopt the most base and injurious suspicions, it must have been dropped by your designing lover, in one of his clandestine attempts to visit your apartments: let me therefore recommend silence, till this affair is properly investigated ; for I swear, that if my fame and character are injured by an avowal of your
cruel

cruel suspicions, the life of St. Croix shall indeed be the sacrifice to appease my just anger. I will attend you to your room, where you had best reflect, that any attack upon the life and honour of your uncle will involve yourself in the deepest disgrace, and perhaps ultimately prove the cause of your lover's ruin."

Adelaide hardly distinguished the conclusion of the Marquis's speech ; she again fainted, and was borne senseless to her apartment.

CHAP. XIII.

FOR several days, the agonized mind of Adelaide rendered her indisposition so violent, that the Marquis was obliged to call in medical assistance; but her illness required the full exertion of the physician's skill to ameliorate. When, however, she did in some degree recover from the effects of the dreadful shock which she had just received, she took the first opportunity of addressing to the medicin who attended her, some enquiries respecting the regiment to which St. Croix belonged.— The physician, totally unconscious that his lovely patient was in the least acquainted with

with

with the Count, informed her that the regiment for which she enquired was stationed at Toulon, waiting expected orders for embarking for the island of Minorca ; but that one of the principal officers, a most amiable young nobleman, had recently been most inhumanly murdered by some robbers, in a wood not far from St. Maximin, while hastening to join his regiment at Toulon.

This cruel intelligence now occasioned a relapse in the health of Adelaide, and for some weeks the death of this hapless unfortunate was almost daily expected. The good physician, however, on learning that to his imprudence this relapse must be attributed, was now unceasing in his cares ; and, assisted by the good constitution of his fair patient, his efforts were at length rewarded by a faint promise of success.

Adelaide once more was pronounced out of danger. Patience and piety now slowly raised the gentlest of their votaries from the couch of sickness and grief ; but all the
spirits

spirits of Adelaide seemed for ever fled, and she awaited but some degree of returning strength to seek repose in the holy tranquillity of a convent.

This wish she communicated to Madame de Beauvais, who had certainly attended her couch through the dreary hours of illness with unwearied kindness—a kindness of which Adelaide was not insensible, and of course felt all her gratitude heightened, when Madame de Beauvais, after an interval of a day, assured her young friend that the Marquis had, without much reluctance, agreed to her desire of retiring into a convent, a conduct which it was impossible to avoid attributing to his anxiety to make himself master of her fortunes.

Several weeks glided on ere Adelaide could leave her chamber, and still no letters arrived, either from De Valmont or Henrietta—a circumstance which could not fail to add to the sorrows of the lovely victim of woe, who frequently lamented to Ma-
dame

dame de Beauvais her not having received any letters from Miss Vernor.

One day, while engaged on this topic, Madame de Beauvais, with much apparent uneasiness, informed Adelaide that Miss Vernor had suddenly quitted the convent of Benedictine ladies at Grenoble, and had safely reached England, from whence she had already written several letters to her friend; but that the Marquis, having thought himself authorised to open and inspect these epistles, he had found them so totally unfit for the perusal of his niece, that he had thought proper to commit most of them to the flames.

Although Madame de Beauvais certainly seemed to soften, as much as possible, this unpleasing intelligence, still Adelaide found, in the conduct of her uncle, so much authoritative asperity, that had she not been situated as she was, such proceedings would have filled her bosom with indignation; but she had now lost all sense of
his

his cruelty, and indeed of every thing but the sad consciousness that, as her beloved Henry was indeed no more, the world was to her a blank. Yet still the cheering beam of friendship faintly gleamed on her darkened prospects, and forbearing to request of the Marquis a sight of Henrietta's remaining letters, she endeavoured to console herself with the idea that she should soon be at liberty to hold some correspondence with the friend of her heart, when out of the power of him who thus unjustly fettered her actions. Faint and indistinct, however, were the soft whispers of hope to the chilled heart of Adelaide, for the dreadful suspicion that her inhuman uncle was the murderer of her lover, corroded and destroyed her life : she could not forbear imagining that he had been assassinated by some vile emissary of the Chevalier Bionville, and who had assumed a monastic garb, to enable him to execute such a deed without suspicion. Fearful and wild conjectures floated on her mind ; and while the

thrill of horror stole over her languid frame, and froze her heart, the thoughts of Adelaide but too frequently glanced on the father Bertrand, the confessor of the Marquis, who, on the only day she had seen him, mentioned that he had but just arrived from St. Maximin,—the very town from which the last letter of St. Croix was dated. The apparent improbability of the confessor's bringing with him into the castle the blood-stained proofs of his guilt, might have banished her suspicions; but when she reflected on the danger which was likely to attend, on his leaving them any where on the road, or taking them with him to his convent, all idea of improbability ceased; and having heard the father also mention the great extent and intricacies of the castle, she could not doubt but that he was well acquainted with all its secret avenues, and that he had deposited the dreadful evidences of his guilt in the deserted rooms, as in a place where they were least likely to be discovered.

This

This suspicion became duly strengthened into conviction, and added a thousand miseries to her situation, without affording her a single hope of punishing the assassins of her lover ; for how could she, even had she possessed positive proofs of their guilt, institute a criminal suit against her uncle, and brand the name of her father's brother with the horrible accusation of murder ?

To leave the criminals to the justice of Heaven was therefore her only resource ; and while, with the meek spirit of Christian charity, she taught her heart to pardon the assassins of her Henry, her prayers for their penitence and conversion mingled with those which she hourly offered to the Throne of Mercy, for the immortal felicity of her St. Croix.

Three tedious months had heavily rolled on, ere the afflicted Adelaide was sufficiently recovered to be able to leave her room ; and when at length she descended to the apartments of the Marchioness, that lady could scarcely recognise, in the pale and

shadowy form which she now beheld, the beautiful, but pensive Adelaide St. Viviers. Deeply affected by the sight of the young mourner, her aunt now received her with a degree of tenderness which keenly penetrated the heart of the amiable sufferer; and her tears evinced her gratitude. The Marchioness herself looked also sorrowful and indisposed; she was reclined on a sofa, and her head was supported by cushions, while an asthmatic oppression seemed to check her utterance.

With much delicacy and chastened cheerfulness, Madame de Beauvais endeavoured to divert and animate the spirits of the invalids; and if she did not succeed in rendering them less internally sorrowful, her efforts, however, prevented both the Marchioness and Adelaide from yielding too much to the grief which certainly filled the mind of each. But the circumstance which chiefly contributed to preserve an air of tranquil resignation to misfortune, was the absence of the Marquis, who was then at
Grenoble.

Grenoble. During the day, the Marchioness spoke of her husband in a tone of mystery and ill-suppressed anger ; but neither the entreaties nor the arguments of Madame de Beauvais, who, with much earnestness, sought to induce the lady to confess wherefore she seemed so much disposed to blame her Lord, succeeded in rendering her in the least degree communicative.

With all the ingenuous artlessness of youth, Adelaide felt but too much inclined, on conceiving for Madame de Beauvais those sentiments of friendship and affection which her attentive kindness had inspired, to place in that lady an unlimited confidence, and to reveal to her all the secrets of her soul ; but the reluctance she experienced at the idea of accusing the brother of her lamented father of the most odious crimes, and the fear that poor Jaques might be injured by some inadvertence of her new friend, prevented Adelaide from departing from the prudent reserve which,

for the sake of others, she compelled herself to observe. This reserve, however, had not been entirely unnoticed by Madame de Beauvais; but justly foreseeing, that to betray an earnestness to penetrate into the secrets of Adelaide would only disappoint her own wish, she wisely forbore any appearance of curiosity, and sought rather to render herself an agreeable than a prying friend.

While religious hope and fortitude now daily restored Adelaide to some degree of health, the Marchioness rapidly declined; and, in less than a fortnight after her niece had been able to leave her room, she was no more.

The death of the Marchioness was keenly regretted by Adelaide, who wept over her tomb tears of heart-felt woe; nor did the grief of Madame de Beauvais, for the loss of her amiable, though eccentric relative, appear less unfeigned.

At the time of his lady's decease, the Marquis was at Paris, whither some important

portant affairs had called him, and he did not return till two days after the funeral. He did not affect a deep grief, which he justly observed would seem absurd to express, for the loss of one for whom he had never felt any sentiment warmer than esteem ; but he paid every outward token of respect to her memory ; and the splendid monument which he erected, if it did not record his sorrow and affection, at least the long epitaph, which contained a sincere enumeration of her virtues, seemed a token that he had had the good sense to feel and revere her merits.

About a week after the funeral, Adelaide mentioned her wish of being immediately permitted to leave the castle, and fix herself in a convent, which she named, as one in which she had passed some of the happy days of her early youth.

The Marquis assented, and only begged, that, as the convent which she had made choice of was situated in Gascony, she would repay the kindness of Madame de

Beauvais, by spending a few weeks at her chateau. This request had already been repeatedly urged by Madame de Beauvais; and, as Adelaide had not declined the invitation, she readily promised acquiescence to the wish of the Marquis, who now mentioned his regret at not being able to attend the ladies on their journey, as he was obliged to be again in Paris on the following week. He then appointed the next morning for conversing with Adelaide relative to some arrangements respecting her estates in Dauphiny and Gascony; hinting at the same time, that he thought she should visit the Chateau de Cressy ere they quitted the province.

Adelaide now withdrew, leaving Madame de Beauvais to settle some particulars respecting their journey with her uncle.

CHAP. XIV.

ON reaching the gallery leading to her own room, Adelaide started back with astonishment and horror, on perceiving the ghastly figure of Father Bertrand, who was pacing the long gallery with a hurried and agitated air. When he heard her footsteps he paused, and turned, then advanced towards her with increased speed, glancing his heavy eyes around, as if he feared observers. Adelaide, who, as he approached, fancied she beheld the murderer of her lover hastening to complete his work of death, by robbing her of existence, involuntarily drew back, on perceiving which he exclaimed—

“ Remain, I entreat, young lady. Such an opportunity may never again occur.—I have communications of the most important kind to make to you. Fly me not, as you value life.”

She paused—the friar passed her, and closed the door by which she had entered. Adelaide tremblingly observed him: he returned, and again approached her; yet stopped occasionally, as if to listen. After a few moments silence, he grasped her cold hand in his, and led her hastily towards a window, which faced a large old-fashioned picture of the martyrdom of St. Stephen.

“ Look !” he cried, pointing to the picture ; “ observe well the representation of that dreadful act. Have you courage to venture here at the still midnight hour ? If you have, come, and you shall be conducted beyond the reach of danger. But if pusillanimous terror forbids your venturing, tremble to meet a fate most horrible to innocence and virtue—tremble to fall the victim of an uncle’s——”

At

At this moment a voice was heard outside the door leading on the grand staircase. Adelaide turned to the door in affright. The Marquis entered, and she looked around in confusion, to observe what effect his sudden presence would produce on the friar—but he was gone; nor had the Marquis apparently seen him.

“Alone, Adelaide!” he exclaimed;—“is it in this dreary spot I find you indulging this blameable repining, which, as it injures your own health, and renders you unfit to be the sweet consoler of others’ woes, must be highly criminal in the eye of Heaven?”

Adelaide shrunk from the Marquis with undissembled eagerness. The tenderness of his manner, although it reminded her of her departed father, filled her with awakened dismay; and, as the friar’s singular and unfinished warning still sounded in her ear, she ran towards the door, and, inattentive to the entreaties of the Marquis, hastened, with all the speed her feeble limbs

could exert, to her own apartment, the outward door of which she locked, and sunk into a chair, in an agony of tears.—The voice of Madame de Beauvais almost immediately demanding admittance, obliged her to rise and open the door.

“My dear young friend!” exclaimed the lady, starting back with astonishment, at beholding Adelaide pale, trembling, and in tears, “why are you thus agitated? What can possibly have occasioned you all this distress?”

Adelaide could not reveal to Madame de Beauvais the cause of her undissembled alarm and grief; she was therefore under the unpleasing necessity of evading her enquiries, by saying a mere trifle had affected her, and which was too insignificant to deserve relating.

Madame de Beauvais cast on her a look, but too expressive of wounded feelings, and instantly quitted the apartment, while Adelaide, not daring to confide to her the secret source of her unhappiness, beheld,
with

with silent agony, her departure. Again she burst into tears, and yielded to the convulsive emotions which laboured in her bosom, till the sudden entrance of Marcella with lights roused her from the indulgence of such injurious feelings.

The old woman was followed by the poor dog, which was still the faithful attendant of his young mistress; and now the animal, as if conscious of her sorrow, leaned his rugged head on her knee, and looked up in her face with an expression of wistful attention. The tears of Adelaide again flowed, and stooping over the dog, she murmured the name of her father, and wiped away the tears which had fallen from her eyes, on the face of the animal. Her thoughts, however, were soon diverted from poor Cæsar by Marcella, who most anxiously importuned her to taste some refreshment, and began to speak of her intended journey.

“ And you are going to the Chateau de Ferroillet, Mademoiselle ?” said Marcella ;

“ I was

"I was there once with my lady, soon after her marriage: it is a lovely place; but it is not a bit too good for the charming lady who owns it. Madame de Ferroillet is one of the most amiable women in all France."

"Madame de Ferroillet!" exclaimed Adelaide; "you mistake, Marcella—the *Chateau de Ferroillet* belongs to Madame de Beauvais."

"To Madame de Beauvais! And is her sister, her dear good sister, no more, Mademoiselle?"

"The sister of Madame de Beauvais is indeed no more, Marcella," replied Adelaide: "But I never before heard that the lady's name was Madame de Ferroillet."

"Then, Mademoiselle, you never heard the name of one of the best ladies that ever lived—So good to the poor, so humble, so sweet tempered, and withal so beautiful.—Ah, well! to be sure we must all go; but I believe Madame de Ferroillet has not left her fellow behind her. Folks did once whisper that some family circumstances almost

almost broke her heart, and drove her into retirement. But be that as it may, the province of Gascony had good reason to rejoice when she settled in it ; and I only hope that Madame de Beauvais is as well beloved."

The thoughts of Adelaide were too much engaged by her recent interview with the mysterious father Bertrand, to suffer her to pay particular attention to Marcella ; and pleading indisposition, she retired into her bed-chamber, to reflect alone on the singular and awful warning which she had received from the friar.

But too much inclined to believe this man a secret agent of De Bionville and her uncle, she shuddered at the idea of placing in him the least confidence. She had but too frequently suspected him as the murderer of her Henry, not to recoil from the idea of trusting herself to his guidance ; and yet she experienced the most agonizing alarm and horror, as the terrific recollection of his words pressed on her mind—

" Tremble

“ Tremble to fall the victim of an uncle’s——.” The unfinished sentence had been pronounced in a tone equally impressive and solemn. How much she regretted that the approach of the Marquis had prevented the friar’s concluding his singular address. The longer she reflected, the more cause of perplexity and distress she found. It was true, that although she could not directly accuse the Marquis of any flagrant ill conduct towards herself, yet she had, since her residence in the castle, found but too much occasion to consider him with suspicion and dread ; and, had any possible means of escape offered, she felt that she should act perfectly right in availing herself of them. But the friar was an object that almost excited as strongly a sentiment of fear and dislike as did the Marquis ; and she could not determine to put herself in his power. The sudden disappearance of father Bertrand, previous to the entrance of her uncle, would have convinced Adelaide that there was a secret outlet from the gallery,
even

even if the friar had not pointed out to her notice the large picture of the martyrdom of St. Stephen, which she now could not doubt concealed some private passage; but this conviction was not of sufficient force to incline her to meet the father, or to attend to his advice. At length, after some hours reflection, she resolved to accompany Madame de Beauvais into Gascony, reasonably concluding, that to place herself under the protection of a lady, whose character and virtues she had so often heard extolled by the late Marchioness St. Viviers, would be the most prudent and eligible plan which she could pursue, especially as her uncle had seriously promised his permission for her retiring into a convent, a retreat which assuredly offered to her troubled mind the surest hope of calm tranquillity. Thus resolved, Adelaide became less uneasy, and retired to repose, indulging that pious reliance on the protection of the Omnipotent Guardian of innocence,

cence, who can alone confound the artifices planned for its destruction.

The first news which greeted Adelaide on the following morning, was, that the Marquis, attended by two servants only, had set off at day-break on his journey to Paris, and had left positive commands that every thing should be ready for the departure of Madame de Beauvais and his niece in three days.

As Adelaide could not perceive any possible reason why Madame and herself should remain three days longer in the castle, she could not avoid expressing some surprise at the circumstance ; but her astonishment ceased, on learning that the delay was occasioned by Madame de Beauvais having ordered a new travelling carriage, which could not be finished earlier.

Pleased, however, at the absence of the Marquis, Adelaide descended to the breakfast parlour, with a mind rather more inclined to pious resignation than she had lately

lately experienced, and was met by Madame de Beauvais, whose countenance was dressed in smiles, and whose language, during breakfast, evinced how truly she rejoiced at the idea of leaving St. Viviers' Castle, and how much she anticipated all the cheerful delights which she said awaited them at her chateau. She then run on with a most florid description of the place; and could Adelaide's still afflicted mind have been inspired with any wish beyond the enjoyment of calm religious seclusion, she would have been ardently desirous of beholding a spot, which she now learned nature and art had decked with their choicest sweets and embellishments.

Madame de Beauvais's two female attendants were to be the only companions in this journey, except one man, a servant recently hired by Madame de Beauvais, at the recommendation of the Marquis, who had in vain endeavoured to prevail on his fair cousin to accept the attendance of his own servants; postillions and horses were to be hired

hired at the different stages; Madame de Beauvais ever making it a point not to travel with her own, which were now sent on before.

In these arrangements, Adelaide had felt no interest, and therefore did not attend to them; and now, while Madame was occupied in preparing for the journey, she was at liberty to remain many hours in her own apartment.

On the night previous to their departure, Jaques, under pretence of taking away Cæsar, visited Adelaide; and while, with tears, the good old man bewailed the approaching loss of his dear young lady, he informed her that the Marquis had left the most positive command that the dog should not be suffered to follow her from the castle; and to this absolute command a haughty threat had been added, of making Jaques, by the loss of his situation, pay the penalty of the least infringement of this order.

“I was born in this castle, Mademoiselle,”
said

said the poor old man; "and were I turned away, where should I find any spot so dear as this; not but if I could serve the memory of my dear master, or could gain you any satisfaction, I would most willingly quit it for ever; but that is not the case, young lady; for 'tis only by my staying that I can bring about what I wish to do before I die."

Adelaide, who had conceived for the faithful animal a regard, which had daily increased, listened to the relation of Jaques with sentiments of indignation and surprise; but ever considerately attentive to the feelings of others, she endeavoured to conceal the sorrowful regret, which the idea of parting with the dog occasioned her, lest the old porter, in his concern at beholding her distress, should be tempted to disobey his Lord's singularly unkind restriction. But she could not so entirely hide her emotion as she wished; for, as she stooped to caress, for the last time, her faithful Cæsar, her tears fell fast, and involuntarily

luntarily on his head ; and Jaques was not slow in observing her grief. He did not speak, however ; and, when he drew the dog out of the room, Adelaide could plainly hear him sob and groan, as he retreated with the animal, after bidding her adieu.

In vain had Mademoiselle St. Viviers attempted to make the old man receive a sum of money, as a token of her esteem and gratitude ; a small trinket was all he would accept of : nor would Marcella be outdone in proofs of disinterested affection, as she also refused every valuable present which Adelaide offered, and demanded only a solemn promise, that as soon as her young lady was settled, she would send for her into Gascony ; a request to which Adelaide immediately acceded, promising to establish the old woman in a neat cottage near the convent she intended to enter.

CHAP. XV.

AT sunrise on the following morning, Adelaide was summoned to the breakfast parlour, where she partook, with Madame de Beauvais, of a slight repast, previous to their setting off. It was early in summer, and nature had assumed all her charms; but the heart of Adelaide was not in unison with the clear sunshine which animated every surrounding object, as she passed through the court, from which could be seen a lovely, yet sublime view of the wildly-romantic scenery around the castle. As the carriage, which, on account of the road, that led among the mountains, was drawn

drawn by mules, passed beneath the ponderous portcullis, Adelaide caught a glimpse of Jaques, who, after opening the gates, had retired into the tower, to hide from observation the sorrow which his countenance would but too well have expressed. Tears now stole from the eyes of the lovely girl; and her emotion was heightened to agony, by hearing the loud howls of Cæsar, and the rattling of the chain which confined him.

“ Mon dieu ! ” exclaimed Madame ; “ is it possible that the horrible yell of that huge animal can affect you thus ? ”

“ It was my father’s dog,” said Adelaide, with a look in which grief and displeasure were so forcibly expressed, that Madame turned away with rather an offended air; but she was silenced, and thus her amiable unhappy young companion was left at liberty to indulge the unconquerable emotion of sorrow which rent her heart. But the disposition of Adelaide was too good to suffer her long to yield to feelings which
must

must render her society irksome to one, from whom she had certainly received many marks of friendship; she therefore soon made an effort to subdue her grief, and apologized to Madame de Beauvais for the hasty inadvertence which she had been guilty of.

Madame de Beauvais smiled a most gracious acceptance of this acknowledgment of error, and began to divert her young friend with a strain of lively and novel remarks, little anecdotes, and descriptions of the *bon ton* in Paris; and these subjects, if they did not afford much amusement to Adelaide, at least prevented her thoughts from dwelling, with all the tenacity of sorrow, on recollections the most painful.

For several days, Madame de Beauvais's stock of anecdotes and wit were unexhausted; for there were not any ancient families, either in Dauphiny, Provence, or Languedoc, of whom she could not relate some tale. Adelaide, however, was infinitely more interested by the scenes

through which she passed, than by the narratives of Madame de Beauvais. It had been the professed intention of the Marquis that his niece should visit the Chateau de Cressy ere she quitted Dauphiny, but his abrupt departure had prevented her doing so; nor did Adelaide feel any regret on the subject, as it would have been particularly afflicting to her to have visited a residence which had been expressly prepared for the reception of her father, on his designed return to France. In many places through which they passed, the horrors of the earthquake of Lisbon were but too forcibly recalled to the mind of Adelaide, by her still hearing relations of its wide-spreading evils.

The second day on which they had entered Gascony, Madame de Beauvais declared her intention of passing the night at a lone, but good inn, some miles from Lombez, as she did not chuse to pass through Thoulouse. It was sunset when they reached this house, which had once been

been a small chateau belonging to a nobleman ; but being very ancient and inconvenient, it had long since been appropriated to the use of travellers. It was not, however, in the high road to Lombez, but in a cross road, which Madame de Beauvais affirmed led by a much nearer route to her chateau.

This venerable building was encompassed by a small wood of old and heavy trees, which stretched their half-withered branches across a dry moat. Nothing could be more desolate and gloomy than its general aspect ; nor could the blazing wood fire, on the wide hearth of the apartment, into which the ladies were ushered by a waiter, whose haggard and dismal countenance but too well accorded with the scene, dispel the strangely fearful and chilling emotion which had seized the heart of Adelaide, on entering the house.

Madame de Beauvais, however, laughed heartily at the uncouth and grotesque air of all around her, then ordered an elegant

supper, which, to the surprise of Adelaide, the larder afforded, and directed that the fire should be replenished, and cards brought.

“ We will play while our supper is preparing, *mon ami*,” said she to Adelaide, with an air of extreme gaiety ; but her young companion, who had an unconquerable aversion to cards, and whose mind was now more than ever averse to the frivolous and vicious amusement which Madame de Beauvais had proposed, begged to decline playing ; at the same time averring, and with truth, that she understood very little of cards,

“ Well, then, we must have recourse to the worn out expedient of telling stories,” said Madame de Beauvais, with undiminished gaiety :—“ but first let us enquire what apartments we are likely to have this night.”

She rung the bell, and ordered her own woman to be sent in ; and in a few minutes Annette appeared, with a face as
white

white as ashes, and eyes staring on vacancy.

“*Ceil!*” exclaimed Madame de Beauvais, gazing on her with a look of mingled mirth and surprise, “has the ghost already appeared?”

“The house is haunted, -indeed, Madame,” replied the trembling woman, “and they want me and Fanchon to sleep in the very room where it happened. All the other rooms, except one with two beds, which it is presumed you, Madam, and the young lady, will occupy, are engaged.”

Madame de Beauvais now looked embarrassed, and her eye glanced on Adelaide with a look which seemed to say—“I hope you will not reproach me for this dilemma.”

Adelaide, who well knew that Madame de Beauvais was accustomed to have one of her attendants always sleep in the same room with her, was equally embarrassed. She shrunk from the idea of proposing to sleep alone in the haunted room, and, as it contained but one bed, she felt disinclined

to request that Fanchon might pass the night with her. At length she broke silence, by saying—" Shall we look at these rooms, Madam?"

" Assuredly," replied Madame de Beauvais; and Annette was now ordered to summon the mistress of the inn to lead the way.

The mistress, a little pert brunette, whose sharp black eyes spoke more of cunning and shrewdness than good-nature, now approached, and, with a thousand curtseys, begged leave to shew the apartments.

Madame de Beauvais and Adelaide, attended by Annette, followed her up a broad shallow flight of decaying stairs, which led up on an open gallery; and now the hostess threw open one of the first doors she came to, and conducted the ladies into a two bedded room, furnished in a very old-fashioned style, but in tolerable repair.

" Here la belle ladies may repose in comfort," said the mistress; " and the demoiselles

moiselles can be accommodated with another room equally good, although there is but one bed in it—and——”

“ But it is haunted, and I dare not sleep in it for my life,” cried Annette, interrupting the hostess, and forgetting her lady’s presence.

“ Haunted ! haunted ! ” screamed the little brunette ; “ it is not true ; but if it was, no persons but those that, have wronged their neighbours need be afraid of a ghost.”

“ Then pray sleep in it yourself,” answered Annette ; and would have proceeded, had not Madame, displeased with the commencing altercation, desired to be shewn into the room alluded to.

Silently Adefaidé followed to this terrific apartment, which was now found to be infinitely less gloomy than they had expected. It had two windows, which looked into the garden behind the house, and the bed, which was very small, stood in an alcove recess in the wall.

This circumstance, so common in France, did not form any objection with Adelaide ; but the tattered gold fringe of the dark green damask curtains and hangings of the room, and the black oak furniture, so little correspondent, gave it the air of a funeral chamber ; nor was the apartment rendered in any degree more cheerful, by several large full-length portraits of heroes in ancient armour, and an immense dusky mirror, whose cracked surface reflected any image tenfold.

That amiable wish of making others satisfied and happy, which urged the timid Adelaide to propose passing the night in this dismal chamber, now struggled in her bosom, with the shivering reluctance which she felt ; and ere her hesitation ceased, Fanchon and the house-maid came into the room. The former half fearfully addressed her lady, and said, that if she pleased, either she or Annette would sit up in the apartment of their lady and Mademoiselle, and

and that the other might have share of the house-maid's bed.

"Be it so," said Madame de Beauvais, seriously.—"But I think, Fanchon, you had better stay with me to-night, and let Annette, who is extremely fatigued, and not very well, avail herself of this young woman's offer: however, I shall not forget the absurd, childish, and ridiculous whims, which have prevented you both from occupying this room, in which, I protest, I would sleep myself, without reluctance; and now, instead of being able to pay attention to me, the one will doubtless be awake all night, listening to a thousand laughable hobgoblin relations, and the other so jaded with sitting up, that to-morrow I suppose I shall find you both stupid, and lose half my things."

The evident peevishness of Madame de Beauvais distressed Adelaide, who knew that she almost indispensably required every attention from her women; and at length her wish that these poor attendants

might, by enjoying comfortable repose, be able to please their lady, prevailed, and she offered to occupy the haunted room herself.

For some moments, Madame de Beauvais rejected every idea of the kind; but the little landlady so strenuously commended *la belle Mademoiselle's* courage, and so repeatedly vowed that there was no cause for fear, that at last Adelaide prevailed, and the room was ordered to be prepared.

The landlady promised every thing.— Madame de Beauvais smiled; and the attendants, with the house-maid, gaped at Adelaide, with looks which most truly evinced their surprise at her temerity.

Madame de Beauvais now returned with Adelaide to the parlour, where they found lights, and a card-table, ready.

“Will not this preparation tempt you, Adelaide,” said Madame, sitting down at the table, and taking the cards into her hands.

Adelaide shook her head with a negative motion.

“You

“You are afraid I should win, my courageous little friend; you who can venture to face the ghost, dare not touch a card.”

This was said sportively, and yet Adelaide almost believed she had discovered in the looks of Madame de Beauvais a faint trait of malicious irony. Quickly, however, did the amiable girl repress the idea, and sought to turn the conversation, by enquiring whether Madame was acquainted with the circumstances which had given rise to the belief of the apartment she was to occupy for the night being haunted?

Madame de Beauvais laughed; and at last throwing down the cards, said—
“So then, my little friend, your apprehensions of this formidable ghost have taken away your relish for any other amusement than that of listening to relations of absurd, superstitious tales, which, notwithstanding all your good sense, may make an unpleasant impression on your mind, if you should happen to recollect them at the still hour of midnight. As to

the murder or suicide, which report says was committed in that room, it occurred so many years back, that really I believe there is no certain account of the affair existing; and I would advise you to check the curiosity which may incline you to wish to hear the improbable tales in circulation. Murder," she added, "is no very pleasing subject of conversation, I think."

Had there not been an evidently assumed gaiety in the manner of Madame de Beauvais, it is probable that Adelaide would have unreluctantly yielded to the propriety of that lady's advice; but the peculiar paleness of her looks, when contrasted with the levity of her air, seemed to imply a degree of internal fear, which greatly increased the timid weakness of her young companion, who, however, had too much delicacy and consideration to make any further enquiries, and therefore remained silent.

Madame de Beauvais was also taciturn, and sat for some moments with her eyes
fixed

fixed on the glowing embers in the hearth, while her look betrayed deep emotion.

The entrance of a servant to lay more billets of wood on the fire, at length roused her from her reverie, and instantly turning towards her with a smiling air, the lady asked—

“ How many years are past since the Marquis de Tresnoy murdered himself in this chateau ? ”

“ About sixty, Madame,” replied the young woman, and letting the billets fall upon the hearth, she dropped a curtsy, and was on the point of commencing a long detail of the affair, when Madame de Beauvais, uttering an exclamation of affected fear, commanded her to desist, and bade her withdraw.

The disappointed girl coloured, and moved towards the door, directing a look towards Adelaide, which plainly said—
“ Oh, how I do wish this cross Madame would let me tell Mademoiselle this terrible story.”

Again

Again Madame de Beauvais commanded the lingering girl to withdraw, and was instantly obeyed; while, turning towards Adelaide, she said—

“ Your desire of hearing this strange tale is so apparent, Mademoiselle St. Viviers, that even that girl has perceived it; therefore, to save you from being induced to listen to some hideously distorted representation of the matter, I will now relate to you what I have heard of this affair; for the truth of my relation I cannot, however, vouch.”

Adelaide now begged that Madame would not distress herself by a repetition of the gloomy tales, but Madame de Beauvais persisted in her intention of relating the story.

“ When the girl told us that this strange event is said to have happened about sixty years ago, she was correct; and thus superstitious tradition tells the tale.

“ The Marquis de Tresnoy was the last noble owner of this at present dilapidated
chateau;

chateau ; and, after having passed the early years of his life in a gloomy and secluded state of celibacy, he suddenly took it into his wise head to marry a young and beautiful girl, the only child of a poor peasant on his estates. But such was the strange singularity of Tresnoy's character, that, although he had thus raised the girl to an exalted situation, and the enjoyment of splendour, he yet could not prevail on himself to amend the condition of the honest peasant, her father, who, after he had humbly consented to the dazzling elevation of his child, was left to regret her loss, amid all the horrors of illness and extreme penury ; for the Marquis did not think proper to bestow the least favour on the poor man, who now, deprived of an affectionate and duteous child, who had ever made his little cot a paradise to him, pined and sickened, while no filial hand remained to smooth his hard pillow, or administer the simple restoratives which had once been prepared by his little Juletta,
from

from the herbs of his fairy garden. Meanwhile, the poor girl, who was but too well apprised of her dear father's situation, felt no happiness amid all the grandeur with which she was surrounded, but incessantly wept at the feet of her Lord, and assailed him with the tenderest importunities, for some relief for her beloved parent. But this marble-hearted Marquis, who was devoted to the idols, selfishness and avarice, could not be prevailed on to part with one single sous to any object that could afford him no particular gratification; and at length becoming quite jealous of his young wife's regard for her parent, he swore to destroy her hopes of "duping him," as he called it, by throwing her sick father into prison, a threat which, on some false pretence, he certainly most inhumanly put in practice, and confined the Marchioness on bread and water in the apartment in which you are to sleep to-night. Unfortunately for this cruel Don, the strange circumstances of the poor peasant became known to,
and

and deeply interested the commandant of the town in which he was imprisoned, and the prison doors of the honest man were soon set open, and he was furnished with plenty of money by his benevolent new protector, who advised him to institute a suit against the Marquis. The good old man was, however, too kind a parent, and too truly loved his little Juletta, to think of rendering her situation more irksome, by irritating her savage Lord; and resolving at once to seek shelter and concealment in a distant province, till the Marquis's heart might relent, he departed from the castle of the good commandant, and took the road leading to Lombez. It was near night-fall as he passed along the side of a small hill on the other side of the wood, which lays at the back of this chateau, and, as he pulled off his wooden shoes, meaning to ford a brook, formed by a spreading mountain torrent, that crossed the road, he perceived, by his side, a tall figure, clothed in black, and standing quite still.

“ The

“The poor man arose, and raising his eyes to this strange-looking Chevalier, with terror and dismay perceived, that the black plume, that, waved in the cap of the stranger, shaded the eyeless sockets of a bare skull. The peasant had now scarce power to stand, while crossing himself devoutly, he falteringly asked the spectre what it required of him. Instantly the ghastly fleshless hands slowly opened the long shadowy cloak, and displayed its skeleton form, while pale rays of light darted from its eye-sockets, and gave the most horrible illumination to the humid cheek-bones and extended jaws of the terrific object, while a hollow voice, which seemed to issue from the earth, said—“ Follow me ;” and suddenly seizing, in its boney ice-cold grasp, the arm of the peasant, drew him resistless, with the rapidity of lightning, up the furze-clad side of the hill, over rocks and precipices, and through the wood, till they reached a low postern gate, that opens into the back court of this house, just as
the

the clock slowly and heavily struck twelve. "This was the hour when the deed was done!" shrieked the voice of the spectre, and its dismal tone resounded along the pavement of the court, while it still led the fear-struck peasant onwards; and after dragging him along the antique stone passages, and great hall, drew him through a large suite of rooms into the chamber where the young Marchioness was confined. What a sight here met the horror-fixed eyes of the peasant! His Julietta was extended on the floor, and her cruel husband was in the act of raising a sword to cut off her lovely hand, when the ghastly spectre rushed between her and her rageful Lord, who, now uttering a horrid cry, plunged the sword into his own bosom, and, before he expired, confessed that he had murdered a gentleman, who was his most intimate friend, and a near relation, about twenty years back, for the sake of some valuable jewels, which he had, at the time of his visit, in his possession. He then told where
the

the remains of his friend were concealed, and the spectre instantly vanished. And thus the little Juletta was restored to her good father, and joyfully left the old chateau, to return to the simplicity of her former days; but was very soon again exalted to a high rank, by the benevolent commandant, who had been such a friend to her father; and this fact is, to this day, to be seen in the records of the commandant's family."

Here Madame de Beauvais paused, and looked at Adelaide, who, with all the artlessness of unadulterated youth, had been most attentive to the tale, but who, now blushing at the rallying looks of Madame de Beauvais, said—

"You do not believe this possible, Madame?"

"*Mon dieu!* what a question! No, certainly, my dear.—What could induce you ever to suppose that I did?"

"Your sad and uneasy looks, when I first enquired."

Madame

Madame gave not Adelaide time to finish her reply ; but rising abruptly, walked up and down the room for a few minutes, and then resuming her seat, gravely said—

“ You have recalled to my mind some very unpleasant remembrances, Mademoiselle ; and, as my late residence in St. Viviers gloomy castle has almost ruined my nerves, I entreat that these silly, yet depressing superstitious subjects, may be dismissed.”

The entrance of the servants with supper prevented the amazed Adelaide from replying ; and soon after they had commenced their repast, the gravity and chagrin of Madame de Beauvais disappeared, and her manner became more lively than ever, talking and laughing so frequently, and with such a degree of volubility, that her excessive levity, instead of cheering, rather added to the unconquerable depression of spirits which affected the mind of Adelaide, who perceived, with surprise and pity, that Madame replenished her

her cup much too frequently. At length the hour of retiring arrived, and Madame de Beauvais's female attendants announced that the ladies' chambers were ready.

Madame now insisted on accompanying Adelaide to the haunted room, whither a servant preceded them with lights, Annette and Fanchon taking care to keep as far back as possible ; and even the girl trembled, as she threw open the room door.— A large wood fire had been kindled in the wide chimney-piece, but its still undiminished blaze could not dissipate the excessive gloom of the chamber ; and its glaring flame being distinctly reflected by the large broken mirror, which happened to hang just opposite to the fire-place, added to the wild singularity of its appearance.

Adelaide felt a palpitating dread agitate her heart, as she cast her eyes around ; and the involuntary paleness of her cheek betrayed her internal emotion to Madame de Beauvais, who watched her with a penetrating

ing eye, and who, after noticing her alarm, insisted that she should partake of her chamber.

Adelaide was restored by this request to something like composure and courage, and peremptorily refused ; nor would she accept the attendance of either of Madame's women. The *fille de chambre* of the inn also requested permission to attend on Mademoiselle ; but Adelaide did not like the pert and bold look of the girl, and therefore rejected her attendance.

At length, after repeated solicitations on the part of Madame, and as repeated refusals on that of her young friend, they bade each other adieu for the night ; and Adelaide found herself alone in the haunted chamber.

Two candles burnt on the dressing-table, which stood beneath the glass, and the wood in the hearth dispersed a warm and cheering glow around ; but Adelaide felt a cold and sickly thrill pervade her frame, and a stunning nervous noise ring in her ears ;

ears ; while these painful sensations were heightened by the recollection of the horrible supernatural form she had beheld in the castle of St. Viviers. Scarcely daring to move, she stole a glance towards the most obscure part of the room, and at length arose, and walked feebly to the dressing-table. A small ebony crucifix, which stood on it, attracted her eye ; and this symbolic image, by reminding her of that gracious Being, whose eye is ever over his creatures, restored her to the power of self-command. She knelt by the bed-side, and prayed devoutly :—her mind was calmed ; and, half divested of her fears, she arose to undress. Just as she again approached the table, she fancied she heard a hollow whispering noise, not far from the spot on which she stood. Her respiration was suddenly suspended by terror, and she listened, with a sensation of confused attention, when the clock of the house loudly struck the hour of twelve, and prevented her from distinguishing any other sound.

As

As the last stroke ceased to vibrate, a death-like silence succeeded. Adelaide still stood fixed in the attitude of trembling dread and expectation. Some moments elapsed, but no sound was heard, except the faint crackling of the faggots in the hearth. An aspiration to Heaven for protection was feebly pronounced by her, and she once more found courage to look around. No extraordinary object met her fearful gaze ; and, in a few minutes more, she concluded that her disordered fancy had created imaginary sounds. Eager to encourage this consoling idea, Adelaide mentally endeavoured to argue herself out of her terrors, and at last ventured to take a light off the table, and examine the walls of the room. Murmuring continued aspirations for fortitude, she tremblingly lifted the torn hangings, and, as minutely as her fear-dimmed sight would permit, examined whether there was any secret entrance, by which an impostor might enter and terrify her : she found none ; and at

length, with reviving composure, finished her search, and again returned to the table, to begin to undress. She set down the candle, and took off her hat. The clock chimed the half hour after twelve. She started ; and once more an irresistible timidity stole over her heart. The reflection of her own lovely, but pale countenance, almost shuddered her. She loosed the band which confined her luxuriant hair, and had just proceeded to take out the comb which fastened it, when she fancied she beheld a tall dark figure reflected in the glass behind her. A mist swam before her eyes, and she had scarcely power to look steadily at this terrific image. The fire burned dimly ; but its dull blaze was sufficient to convince her that some dreadful form stood in the middle of the room. It moved—and Adelaide, in speechless horror, sunk on the floor. On recovering, she found herself closely encircled in the arms of a man habited in black, and wearing a black mask. She screamed and struggled ;
he

he pressed her convulsively to his bosom, and bore her a few paces across the room. She shrieked, and again her senses had nearly fled, when she revived to find herself extended on the floor, and to behold her mysterious terrifier struggling to disengage himself from a large dog, which was attacking him with furious ferocity, and which the astonished Adelaide instantly recognized to be Cæsar.

With a shriek of joy, she uttered the animal's name; it flew towards her for a moment, and then sprung to renew its attack upon the man, who, in that moment, escaped. The howl and rage of the animal, who was now scraping violently at a part of the wall near the door, directed Adelaide to the spot where the mysterious stranger had disappeared. She rose, and, with faltering steps, approached the place, to call the dog away, and perceived, by the blood which here stained the floor, that the villain had not escaped unpunished.

Scarce had she quieted the dog, when

steps were heard in the gallery, and, in the next moment, the voice of the hostess was heard, requesting admission.

Adelaide fearfully opened the door, when the mistress of the inn entered, and, after declaring, with looks of terror, that some villains had broke into the house, asked permission to search the room.

This was instantly granted, and Adelaide related the recent alarm she had experienced, and her miraculous deliverance, by means of the animal, which had so wonderfully, it appeared, followed her from Dauphiny.

The whole inn was now rouzed, and, in a few minutes, Madame de Beauvais, in her morning robe, rushed into the chamber, clasped Adelaide in her arms, and, in a convulsed and hurried tone, asked if she was safe? The manner of her delivery from the robber was now repeated, and congratulations, mingled with exclamations of wonder, and commendations of the now highly caressed Cæsar, resounded on all sides.

sides. The animal, however, made many attempts to get through the private entrance, but Adelaide, who feared that the incensed villains might kill her faithful guard, directed some of the men-servants not to suffer him to leave the room. This command was obeyed, and the dog was soon after led to the apartment of Madame de Beauvais, where she insisted on Adelaide's passing the remainder of the night, declaring that she would leave the inn at the dawn of day, as, by setting off early, they should reach the chateau de Ferroillet the next night. Madame de Beauvais's declared fear of dogs prevented her from favouring Cæsar with any caressing tokens of her admiration of his sagacity and fidelity ; nor was the animal by any means inclined to accept marks of her approbation, as he several times uttered a low sullen growl, as she approached near him.

After a diligent, but unsuccessful search throughout the house, it was ascertained

that the villains had escaped, or at least so effectually concealed themselves in the surrounding wood, that there could be small hopes of their being discovered. Their vicinity was, however, so strongly suspected, that the inhabitants of the inn thought proper to sit up the remainder of the night.

Amid all the bustle, Adelaide had observed that there did not appear to be any stranger, except her own party, in the inn; and she now enquired of the hostess whether it was really so? The woman, in a confused and hesitating manner, replied, that the guests she had expected did not arrive. She then turned the discourse, by saying, that she discovered the robbers had entered into the house, by finding a door open, which had been for some years nailed up, and which led out into the gardens and the road. She continued for several moments, to congratulate herself that the care of some fresh sweetmeats had accidentally kept her and two of the maids up, and then

run

run to prepare some cordial for Madame de Beauvais, who was still shivering with the cold, which had struck her, on being so suddenly and so alarmingly disturbed.

CHAP. XVI.

THE first rays of the sun had hardly tinged the tops of the forest, ere Madame de Beauvais and Adelaide were seated in the carriage, and their retinue increased by several servants belonging to the inn, well armed, a precaution against the attacks of the robbers, who might be lurking in wait for the carriages. No accident, however, occurred; and the travellers reached the chateau de Ferroillet at a late hour, in per-

fect safety. Neither the lateness of the hour, nor the fatigue which oppressed Adelaide, could prevent her from noticing the splendour and elegance of Madame de Beauvais's residence, which seemed to combine all that was indicative of correct taste and almost princely magnificence.—The spacious vestibule, the light and elegant saloon, exhibited equal specimens of the refinement and judgment of the owner; and Madame would have felt the most grateful delight at the praises which fell from the lips of her amiable young guest, could she have claimed any right to these praises; but the chateau had been built and decorated under the directing taste of Madame Ferroillet, and therefore the present possessor heard every commendation with indifference or chagrin.

Adelaide, soon perceiving that her friend did not appear very much gratified by her just encomiums, became silent, and turned her attention to her faithful Cæsar, who had followed her into the saloon, from
which

which Madame de Beauvais insisted he should not be removed.

This mark of friendly consideration was highly pleasing to Adelaide, and she failed not to acknowledge her thanks to Madame de Beauvais in the warmest terms, for not having suffered her extreme aversion to dogs to banish Cæsar from her side.

After a slight supper, Adelaide was conducted to an elegant suite of apartments, where she found a young female in waiting, whom Madame de Beauvais's housekeeper had hired, purposely to attend on her young guest.

After pointing out to Cæsar herself a mat, which had been laid for him in the anti-room, Adelaide dismissed the housekeeper, who had respectfully attended her to her room, and entered her chamber, where, in her new attendant, she instantly recognised Nannette, the girl who had been hired at Rochfort, to attend her to the castle of St. Viviers.

Adelaide was pleased at this circumstance,
as

as the delight of the girl, on discovering who was her new lady, seemed as sincere as it was unbounded. Mademoiselle St. Viviers had now no cause to fear solitude at night, as Nannette was to sleep in a small chamber beyond the dressing-room.

The deep and tranquil slumbers, which Adelaide now enjoyed, after her late agitation and fatigue, continued till the sun had nearly reached the meridian on the next day ; but when she awoke, she arose to behold a scene of varied beauty, which, in happier times, would have enchanted her ; and even now she lingered at her windows, contemplating the delightful prospects, which on every side surrounded the chateau, with mingled sentiments of admiration and sadness.

Erected midway on a wooded lofty hill, which sheltered it from the North, the chateau commanded an extensive view of the country, terminated, at a few leagues distance, by the Pyrenees. Far on the West was seen the Bay of Biscay, and the nearer
scenery

scenery displayed all of luxuriant cultivation and fruitful vegetation. Extensive and beautiful gardens, belonging to the chateau, stretched along the side of the hill; and glowing in the Southern sunbeams, were seen elegantly arranged plantations of a thousand delightful shrubs; orange, almond, myrtle, and the varied groves of beautiful summer trees and flowers, formed the most pleasing contrast to the extended forests, which shrouded the lofty Pyrenean mountains, from whose dark bosom the eye could trace the Adour wandering into the vale, and follow it through its fruitful windings, as it stole along at the foot of the hill on which the chateau stood, and pursued its course to the bosom of the ocean.

Adelaide was so much engaged by the scenes before her, that she felt no inclination to leave her apartment. Some of the features of the scenery reminded her but too forcibly of the Chateau de Arrancy, that happy home where first, in infancy, she became sensible of the affection and
tenderness

tenderness of her parents, and had experienced the dawn of love in the society of her lamented St. Croix. As she gazed on the tall summits of the Pyrenees, those mountains so dear to her in life's most charming season, her eyes filled with tears, and the agonizing remembrance of her past felicity added new pangs to the conviction of her altered and sad state.

A summons from Madame de Beauvais, who waited breakfast for her, obliged Adelaide to rouse herself from the indulgence of unavailing grief: she dried her tears, and soon descended to the breakfast-room, where she found Madame all gaiety and spirit, and wholly occupied by anticipating the fete which she intended to give in a few days, as a method of announcing her return to the chateau.

The dejected mien and heavy eyes of Adelaide could not, however, fail to attract her notice, and she at length attempted to soothe the afflicted girl, by every argument she could devise.

The

The convent to which Adelaide meant to retire was situate but a few leagues from the chateau, and enveloped in a romantic wood at the foot of the Pyrenees. Madame de Beauvais surprised and gratified her young friend, by proposing an excursion thither on the morrow ; and Adelaide accepted this considerate offer with unfeigned pleasure ; and the remainder of the day was passed by Madame de Beauvais in displaying the chateau to her pensive guest, and in arranging the style of the fete she intended to give, which she at length decided should be a masked ball ; and, as she intended to set off for the convent of Santa Catherina at an early hour in the morning, the inhabitants of the chateau retired early to repose.

END OF VOL. II.



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